



## Doing Business in Trinidad and Tobago:

### 2011 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies

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## Chapter 1: Doing Business in Trinidad and Tobago

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### Market Overview

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Trinidad and Tobago Market Overview, 2008 to 2010			
	2008	2009	2010 est
Real GDP growth	2.4%	(3.5%)	2.8%
Inflation (retail price index)	14.5%	1.3%	14.1%
Unemployment	4.6%	5.8%	6.4%
Energy Sector as % GDP	39.8%	42.3%	42.5%
Energy Sector Growth	(1.0%)	2.5%	0.2%
Manufacturing Sector Growth	0%	0.1%	0.1%
Manufacturing Sector as % GDP	8.2%	8.3%	8.4%
Construction Sector Growth	0.1%	(0.3%)	(0.7%)
Construction Sector as % GDP	8.0%	7.7%	7.0%
Balance of Payments (USmil)	US\$2,705.5	US\$1,800	NA
Current Account Balance (USmil)	US\$8,518.8	US\$1,759.1	NA
Gross International Reserves (US mil)	US\$9,380.3	US\$8,651.6	NA
Trade Balance (US mil)	US\$9,017.2	US\$2,600	US\$5,318

- Trinidad and Tobago has a favorable and open investment climate and most investment barriers have been eliminated.
- Trinidad and Tobago experienced another economic contraction in 2009 and expects minimal growth in 2010. After a 3.5% decline in 2009, Real GDP growth is expected to increase by 2.8% in 2010.
- The manufacturing sector expects a modest growth of 0.1 percent, settling at 8.4 percent of GDP. The government of Trinidad and Tobago expects minor fluctuation in the manufacturing subsectors. For instance food, beverages and tobacco from 4.1 percent in 2009 to 4.0 percent in 2010, whereas textile, garments and footwear should remain steady at 0.2 percent in 2010, as should wood and related products at 0.1 percent. Chemical and non-metallic minerals should also be constant at 1.4 percent while assembly type and related industries should experience a slight bump from 1.5 percent in 2009 to 1.7 percent in 2010.

- Tourism is a major generator of employment, an increasingly important source of foreign exchange. The Tourism Development Act was amended in 2005 to provide tax holidays and other incentives to investors with tourism projects. Tourism has been emphasized as a key sector for development and investment by the People's Partnership government, yet the distribution and restaurant sector should contract from 10.6 percent in 2009 to 10 percent in 2010. Hotels and guesthouses are expected to maintain 0.2 percent of the GDP in 2010.
- The construction and quarrying industry contracted in 2009 and 2010 with most major construction project completed or near completion, and slow-down of private and public construction projects. The sectors contribution to 2010 GDP is anticipated to be 7.0 percent, down from 7.7 percent in 2009. A recent loan of US\$1.5 million from the InterAmerican Development Bank, however, is targeted at several construction sectors and may provide a substantial stimulus to the industry in 2011 and 2012.
- The Financial Services sector continued its 2009 contraction in 2010 with a shift from 13.0 percent in 2009 to 12.8 percent in 2010. Output growth is projected to decelerate in the Finance, Insurance and Real Estate sub-sector reflecting slow growth in the commercial banking and non-bank financial institution and decline in real estate and other miscellaneous services. Additionally, the fallout over the government's mishandled bailout of investment firm CLICO has shaken confidence in the sector generally.
- The government launched TTBizLink (<https://www.ttbizlink.gov.tt/>) in an attempt to streamline the requirements for doing business in TT. Designed to facilitate business and trade, companies/individuals who wish to import/export goods, apply for permits and licenses, register a business or conduct other business related activities can submit their documents online via this website.
- As of December 2010, headline inflation jumped to 14.1, a significant increase from 1.3 percent a year earlier. Food prices, driven up by flooding in early 2010, forced prices up generally. Vegetable prices increased by 52.5 percent, fruits by 37.9 percent, and salt and spices by 82.4 percent. Price increases for transport (12.1 percent) and recreation and culture (13.6 percent) also contributed to the spiral of inflation.
- In 2009, TT recorded a balance of payment deficit of US\$712.6 million representing a significant decrease from US\$2,7505.5 million in 2008.
- Current account surplus decreased from US\$8,791.9 million in 2008 to US\$1,759.1 in 2009, due mainly to a major decrease of in merchandise trade.
- At the end of 2009, TT's gross international reserves stood at US\$8,651.6 million representing the equivalent of 11.9 months of import cover.
- Unemployment reached 6.4 percent in 2010, an increase from 5.3 percent in 2009, but many observers believe the unofficial rate to be as much as two times higher.

- From October 2009 to March 2010 the country recorded a trade surplus of approximately US\$1,248.2, a significant decrease from the previous year's US\$6,200.4.
- The United States continues to be TT's leading supplier/market, accounting for 26.1 percent of TT's imports and 44 percent of exports in 2009.
- English-language workforce.
- Good investment climate.
- Stable democratic political system
- Rule of law and respect for contracts are well-established in business practices.
- Strong political, economic and cultural ties with the U.S.

### **Market Challenges**

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- There are no investment barriers.

While there are no significant barriers to investment or market entry, be advised that work permits are required for persons engaging in legitimate employment in excess of 30 days. The work permit must be obtained by the prospective employer prior to the employee's arrival in TT. Work permits are issued for a specific period (usually two years, but not more than three years), during which time a local resident must be trained to replace the foreign employee. Employers can apply for an extension of the work permit which can be granted for up to two years. Be advised that work permits may now be processed electronically through the TTBizLink website at <https://www.ttbizlink.gov.tt/>.

### **Market Opportunities**

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Market opportunities are available in the following sectors:

- Oil and Gas Field Machinery and Services
- Food Processing and Packaging
- Automotive Parts and Accessories
- Telecommunications
- Computers and Peripherals
- Construction
- Tourism

### **Market Entry Strategy**

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Before entering the TT market, it is advisable to contact the U.S. Commercial Service Regional Office in the Dominican Republic to arrange for appropriate services to facilitate market entry.

– See Chapter 3.

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## **Chapter 2: Political and Economic Environment**

For background information on the political and economic environment of the country, please click on the link below to the U.S. Department of State Background Notes.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35638.htm>

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## Chapter 3: Selling U.S. Products and Services

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### Using an Agent or Distributor

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Trinidad and Tobago (TT) has no specific legislation regulating representatives, distributors, or franchisers. Agreements for the appointment of agents are governed by common law principles under which the parties are virtually free to form their own contractual terms. There are no statutory restrictions or regulations governing the length of appointment, the period of notice required for termination, or the level of commission to which an agent is entitled.

A foreign investor is free to negotiate representation, agency, distribution, and franchising agreements with TT nationals. Royalties and commission rates are not regulated and may be freely agreed upon by the parties concerned. An agent does not generally acquire any additional rights as an employee beyond those stated in the contract. Contracts normally specify that the agent not be regarded as an employee or partner of the principal. However, long-term distributors/agents sometimes acquire certain claims on distribution rights that go beyond and, in some cases, supersede contract rights under local common law interpretations. In such cases, the foreign product supplier may have to buy back distributor rights from the local agent.

**Sales Agency Agreement:** A typical sales agency agreement describes the extent of the agent's field of operations and the extent to which the principal accepts limitations on his/her freedom of action. The agreement gives the agent an opportunity to exploit markets, but allows the principal to withdraw exclusivity under stated conditions. The provisions in a Sales Agency Agreement regarding payments of the agent's commission and accounting between the parties should be drawn to minimize their tax liabilities, including the expenses of Value Added Tax (VAT: 15 percent on retail sales of most

goods and services), and to take advantage of the US/TT Double Taxation Treaty ([www.irs.ustreas.gov/pub/irs-trty/trinidad.pdf](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/pub/irs-trty/trinidad.pdf)).

**Marketing Agency Agreement:** In a marketing agreement, no authority is vested in the agent to contract on behalf of the principal. In an appropriately drafted marketing agency agreement, an overseas supplier will not be deemed to be trading within TT and incurs no tax liability on sales of the product.

**Distributor Agreement:** A distributor agreement typically includes terms on the extent of the distributor's territory, the extent to which he is protected from competition from other distributors of the same manufacturer's products, and the distributor's limits to supply outside the territory. Such an agreement normally includes training to familiarize the distributor with the product.

U.S. exporters seeking suitable agents and distributors are advised to contact the nearest U.S. Export Assistant Center (USEAC) at <http://www.export.gov/eac/index.asp> for guidance on using the appropriate Commercial service. Additional information can also be obtained on [www.BuyUSA.gov/caribbean](http://www.BuyUSA.gov/caribbean).

## **Establishing an Office**

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In 1997, a new Companies Act replaced the 1950 Companies Ordinance, which was based on the U.K. Companies Act of 1929. It is based largely on the Canadian model, which is similar to U.S. law.

**Public and Private Limited Liability Companies:** The most widely used form of business entity is the limited liability company, of which there are two types: public and non-public. Non-public companies are required to have at least two directors whereas a public company is required to have no fewer than three directors, at least two of whom are neither officers nor employees of the company or any of its affiliates. The articles of incorporation of a non-public company restrict the right to transfer shares, and prohibit any invitation to the public to subscribe for shares or debentures.

**Branch Offices:** External companies which establish a place of business in Trinidad and Tobago (TT) are required to register within 14 days of their establishment under Division 2, Part 5 of the Companies Act. In order to register branch offices, companies must file constitutional and corporate information with the Registrar of Companies. The information must include the name of an attorney-in-fact resident in TT authorized to accept service for process and other notices. Filing fees and expenses amount to approximately TT\$2,200 (US\$348). It is somewhat easier to register a branch than to incorporate a company; however, the ease of registration should not be the primary deciding factor in determining the type of entity to establish, especially given the tax disadvantages trading branches face. Registration is now possible electronically via the TTBizLink website at <https://www.ttbizlink.gov.tt/>.

**Incorporation:** The Registrar of Companies must approve the name of any proposed company with limited liability and the name of the company must include the word "limited" or abbreviation "ltd." Articles of Incorporation, which include rules governing shareholder's rights, must be filed with the Registrar of Companies in order to obtain a



Certificate of Incorporation. Bylaws must include rules and regulations governing the company's operations.

Companies Registry  
Ministry of Legal Affairs  
Registration House  
72-74 South Quay  
Port of Spain

Tel: (868) 627-2784 or 624-1660, Ext. 3106; Fax: (868) 623-0410

Website: [http://www.legalaffairs.gov.tt/registrar/companies\\_registry.htm#3](http://www.legalaffairs.gov.tt/registrar/companies_registry.htm#3)

Once registered, the company must:

- Apply to the VAT (Value Added Tax) Office for a registration number (when applicable).
- Apply to the Board of Inland Revenue for a corporation tax file number and an employer "PAYE" number.
- Apply to the National Insurance Board for registration as an employer for national insurance purposes.

All companies are required to submit an annual return each financial year to the Registrar of Companies. Public companies must also submit audited financial statements. Companies are required to hold at least one general meeting every calendar year to discuss the annual financial statements of the company and the appointment of directors and auditors.

## Franchising

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Local and international franchises are common in Trinidad and Tobago (TT). They include Burger King, Church's Chicken, KFC, Papa John's, Pizza Hut, TCBY, TGI Friday's, Subway Sandwiches, Ruby Tuesday, Popeye's, Payless Shoe Source, Long John Silver's, Captain D's Seafood and Pollo Tropical, which opened in January 2010, and Wendy's, which opened in the first quarter of 2011. Royalty payments related to a franchise agreement are payable to a non-resident franchiser and subject to varying withholding-tax rates depending on the country of residence of the franchiser and the applicable double taxation treaty.

As an alternative to direct franchising, a franchiser may delegate responsibility for recruiting, appointing and supervising franchisees to a 'master licensee' in TT.

## Direct Marketing

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Little or no direct telephone marketing or door-to-door sales occur in Trinidad and Tobago. Radio, television and newspaper advertising or flyer inserts are widely used. In recent years, the practice of leaving promotional material in mailboxes has become very popular.

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Joint Venture Agreements negotiated between the parties governs joint venture relationships in Trinidad and Tobago. U.S. companies sometimes find it necessary to establish such a relationship to gain ready access to an established network of contacts and to easily obtain information and action on the tendering procedures for government contracts.

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Almost all sales to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GOTT) must go through the tendering process. Government procurement practices are largely open and fair, although the GOTT has increased procurements through special purpose corporations that are not required to use the Central Tendering Board. The GOTT is not a party to the WTO Government Procurement Code. The GOTT and government-owned companies generally adhere to an open bidding process for procurement of products and services. Tender announcements are published in the three daily newspapers. The American Chamber of Commerce provides tracking of many tenders through its website. Tender notices can also be found on Government's website <http://www.ttconnect.gov.tt/> under "Doing Business with the Government" and at the U.S. Government site for exporters: [www.export.gov](http://www.export.gov).

## **Distribution and Sales Channels**

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The distribution and sales channels are determined by the type of business and includes direct purchasing, retail service centers, distributors and agents, middlemen and wholesalers.

## **Selling Factors/Techniques**

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All sales material must be in English. U.S. companies must be aware of the labeling requirements and make sure that products conform to Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards requirements or TT food and drug requirements. In the case of pharmaceuticals and food supplements, companies should first identify a suitable local agent or distributor who will then ensure that these requirements are satisfied before importing the product. Companies can also contact the Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division of the Ministry of Health at 92 Frederick Street, Port of Spain, Tel: (868) 623-2854; Fax: (868) 623-2477 directly. This Division is responsible for the administration of the Food and Drugs Act and Regulations ([http://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/Laws2/Chs.\\_28-31/30.01/30.01\\_aos.htm](http://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/Laws2/Chs._28-31/30.01/30.01_aos.htm)) and the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act and Regulations ([http://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/Laws2/Chs.\\_28-31/30.03/30.03\\_aos.htm](http://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/Laws2/Chs._28-31/30.03/30.03_aos.htm)).

## Electronic Commerce

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The use of electronic commerce is growing. Many persons purchase products from the U.S. via the Internet. However, Trinidad and Tobago companies have been slow in establishing their own electronic businesses.

## Trade Promotion and Advertising

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The preferred advertising medium would depend to a large extent on the type of product or services, and the target audience. Radio, print advertising (mostly newspapers), and television are widely used. The widespread viewing of American programs via cable enhances demand for U.S. products. Given Trinidad and Tobago's small size, word of mouth also serves as an important advertising factor.

While TT has no laws or regulations governing product advertising and other forms of trade promotion, except for a law protecting trademark use, the TT Bureau of Standards does regulate packaging and branding. For the most part the industry is "self-regulated" by the Advertising Agencies Association of Trinidad and Tobago (AAATT) and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

Advertising of professional services, such as those of doctors and lawyers, is generally not allowed. With the 2009 proclamation of the Tobacco Control Act, there is a prohibition against tobacco advertising and sponsorship ([Tobacco-Control-Act-2009](#) .)

### Newspapers-Television-Radio

Radio/TV/Cable Stations:

In 2010, there were 37 free-to-air FM radio stations, nine free-to-air television broadcasting stations, eight subscription television broadcasting stations and one television broadcasting service via cable operating in the market. Some are formatted to attract specific ethnic or age groups.

## Pricing

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Businesses are generally free to price their products as meets their marketing objectives. Prices of sugar, schoolbooks and some pharmaceuticals are controlled. Prices may, however, be challenged under Trinidad and Tobago's anti-dumping laws ([http://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/Laws2/Chs.\\_74-78/78.05/78.05\\_aos.htm](http://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/Laws2/Chs._74-78/78.05/78.05_aos.htm).)

## Sales Service/Customer Support

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There are no regulations governing sales, service or customer support, but all companies doing business in Trinidad and Tobago are required to have an agent or representative registered in TT who can be held liable in the event of legal disputes.

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### Protecting Your Intellectual Property in Trinidad and Tobago:

Several general principles are important for effective management of intellectual property ("IP") rights in TT. First, it is important to have an overall strategy to protect your IP. Second, IP is protected differently in TT than in the U.S. Third, rights must be registered and enforced in TT, under local laws. Your U.S. trademark and patent registrations will not protect you in TT. There is no such thing as an "international copyright" that will automatically protect an author's writings throughout the entire world. Protection against unauthorized use in a particular country depends, basically, on the national laws of that country. However, most countries do offer copyright protection to foreign works under certain conditions, and these conditions have been greatly simplified by international copyright treaties and conventions.

Registration of patents and trademarks is on a first-in-time, first-in-right basis, so you should consider applying for trademark and patent protection even before selling your products or services in the TT market. It is vital that companies understand that intellectual property is primarily a private right and that the US government generally cannot enforce rights for private individuals in TT. It is the responsibility of the rights' holders to register, protect, and enforce their rights where relevant, retaining their own counsel and advisors. Companies may wish to seek advice from local attorneys or IP consultants who are experts in TT law. The U.S. Commercial Service can provide a list of local lawyers upon request.

While the U.S. Government stands ready to assist, there is little we can do if the rights holders have not taken these fundamental steps necessary to securing and enforcing their IP in a timely fashion. Moreover, in many countries, rights holders who delay enforcing their rights on a mistaken belief that the U.S. Government can provide a political resolution to a legal problem may find that their rights have been eroded or abrogated due to legal doctrines such as statutes of limitations, laches, estoppel, or unreasonable delay in prosecuting a law suit. In no instance should U.S. Government advice be seen as a substitute for the obligation of a rights holder to promptly pursue its case.

It is always advisable to conduct due diligence on potential partners. Negotiate from the position of your partner and give your partner clear incentives to honor the contract. A good partner is an important ally in protecting IP rights. Consider carefully, however, whether to permit your partner to register your IP rights on your behalf. Doing so may create a risk that your partner will list itself as the IP owner and fail to transfer the rights should the partnership end. Keep an eye on your cost structure and reduce the margins (and the incentive) of would-be bad actors. Projects and sales in TT require constant attention. Work with legal counsel familiar with TT laws to create a solid contract that includes non-compete clauses, and confidentiality/non-disclosure provisions.

It is also recommended that small and medium-size companies understand the importance of working together with trade associations and organizations to support efforts to protect IP and stop counterfeiting. There are a number of these organizations, both TT or U.S.-based. These include:

- The U.S. Chamber and local American Chamber of Commerce
- National Association of Manufacturers (NAM)
- International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA)
- International Trademark Association (INTA)
- The Coalition Against Counterfeiting and Piracy
- International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition (IACC)
- Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA)
- Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO)

## **IP Resources**

A wealth of information on protecting IP is freely available to U.S. rights holders. Some excellent resources for companies regarding intellectual property include the following:

- For information about patent, trademark, or copyright issues -- including enforcement issues in the US and other countries -- call the STOP! Hotline: **1-866-999-HALT** or register at [www.StopFakes.gov](http://www.StopFakes.gov).
- For more information about registering trademarks and patents (both in the U.S. as well as in foreign countries), contact the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) at: **1-800-786-9199**.
- For more information about registering for copyright protection in the US, contact the US Copyright Office at: **1-202-707-5959**.
- For more information about how to evaluate, protect, and enforce intellectual property rights and how these rights may be important for businesses, a free online training program is available at [www.stopfakes.gov](http://www.stopfakes.gov).
- For US small and medium-size companies, the Department of Commerce offers a "SME IP Advisory Program" available through the American Bar Association that provides one hour of free IP legal advice for companies with concerns in Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Russia, and . For details and to register, visit: [http://www.abanet.org/intlaw/intlproj/iprprogram\\_consultation.html](http://www.abanet.org/intlaw/intlproj/iprprogram_consultation.html)
- For information on obtaining and enforcing intellectual property rights and market-specific IP Toolkits visit: [www.StopFakes.gov](http://www.StopFakes.gov) This site is linked to the USPTO website for registering trademarks and patents (both in the U.S. as well as in foreign countries), the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website to record registered trademarks and copyrighted works (to assist customs in blocking imports of IP-infringing products) and allows you to register for Webinars on protecting IP.

- The U.S. Commerce Department has positioned IP attachés in key markets around the world. You can get contact information for the IP attaché who covers TT at: Economic/Commercial Officer, U.S. Embassy Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Tel: (868) 822-5818; Fax: (868) 822-3918.

## Due Diligence

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Due diligence is used to investigate and evaluate a business opportunity. It is conducted for several reasons, including confirmation that the business is what it appears to be, to avoid a bad business transaction, to gain information that will be useful for valuing assets, defining representations and warranties and/or negotiating price concessions. The parties conducting due diligence generally create a checklist of needed information and then conduct interviews with external sources including customers, suppliers, industry experts, trade organizations, market research firms and others.

A list is provided below of TT market research firms that can provide some assistance in this area:

### Market Research Firms

The U.S. Commercial Service offers the International Company Profile to assist with the due diligence process. Information can be obtained by contacting the nearest U.S. Export Assistant Center (USEAC) at <http://www.export.gov/eac/index.asp> for guidance on using the appropriate Commercial service. Additional information can also be obtained on [www.BuyUSA.gov/caribbean](http://www.BuyUSA.gov/caribbean).

## Local Professional Services

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A local attorney is recommended in establishing business arrangements. The companies listed below are among the most experienced and respected law firms that deal specifically with corporate and business law. Most of the following companies work on both islands of Trinidad and Tobago. The U.S. Embassy assumes no responsibility for the performance of the firms listed.

### Attorneys-at-Law

## Web Resources

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American Chamber of Commerce of TT (AmCham): <http://www.amchamtt.com>  
 Caribbean Market Research Ltd: <http://www.caribbeanmarketresearch.com>  
 Doing Business in Trinidad and Tobago (Taxes): <http://www.trinidadlaw.com>  
 Evolving Technologies and Enterprise Development Co. Ltd. (Eteck): [www.eteck.co.tt](http://www.eteck.co.tt)  
 Export –Import Bank of the U.S: <http://www.exim.gov/>  
 Market Facts and opinions Ltd: <http://www.mfo2000.com>

Mary King and Associates: <http://www.harrisinteractive.com>  
Ministry of Health: <http://www.health.gov.tt/>  
Ministry of Legal Affairs: <http://www.legalaffairs.gov.tt>  
Ministry of Trade and Industry: <http://www.tradeind.gov.tt>  
TTBizLink: <https://www.ttbizlink.gov.tt/>  
National Library and Information System Authority of TT: <http://www.nalis.gov.tt>  
Telecommunications Authority of TT: <http://www.tatt.org.tt>  
Trinidad and Tobago Government on line: <http://www.ttconnect.gov.tt>  
Trinidad and Tobago Investment Opportunities and Incentives: <http://www.investtnt.com>  
U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC): <http://www.opic.gov>  
U.S. Trade Development Agency: <http://www.tda.gov>  
U.S. Department of Commerce Trade Compliance Center: <http://tcc.export.gov/>

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## Chapter 4: Leading Sectors for U.S. Export and Investment

### **Commercial Sectors**

- Energy Services
- Food Processing and Packaging
- Automotive Parts and Accessories
- Telecommunications
- Computers and Peripherals
- Construction
- Tourism

### **Agricultural Sector**



## Energy Services

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The energy sector (comprising oil, natural gas and petrochemicals) is the life force of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. It accounts for approximately 40 percent of the country's GDP. Oil was discovered in TT as early as 1865. Commercial oil production began in 1908 with non-associated gas production in the 1950s and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) production in 1999.

Although petroleum continues to be a major source of energy and its use is increasing, the worldwide demand for natural gas is growing at a faster rate. TT has capitalized on this trend. About 57% of gas now produced in TT goes into LNG production for export, and 28% goes to the domestic petrochemical industry. LNG is the major export from TT. The country became the second largest producer in the Atlantic basin and the largest in the Western Hemisphere. TT is a major supplier of LNG to the U.S, exporting approximately 30% of the US' LNG.

TT is now the largest exporter of ammonia in the world – 4.5 million tons per year – and the largest exporter of methanol – 3 million tons per year. TT has a urea plant, nine ammonia plants and five methanol plants, combining both local and foreign investment.

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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Best prospects include line pipe used for oil or gas, drill pipe, casings and tubing for drilling, parts for gas turbines, pumps and parts for filling station pumps. Machinery for liquefying air or other gases and filtering or purifying machinery are also in great demand.

### Opportunities

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In the traditional field of petrochemicals, opportunities for activity and investment present themselves in the forms of increased exploration activity in shallow, mid-depth, and deep offshore blocks, including production sharing contracts, increased stimulation of oil production in mature fields. The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has also called for the reduction of the Petroleum Profit Tax for deep water exploration from 50 percent to 35 percent, an Investment Credit of 20 percent on qualifying capital expenditure for the Supplemental Petroleum Tax for both land and marine oil field or for enhanced oil recovery projects i.e. steam, carbon dioxide or water-floor injection.

The Methanol Holdings (Trinidad) Ltd., second melamine train start-up is expected to commence over the next several months and the combined capacity will be 60,000 metric tons per annum, making this plant one of the largest methanol producers in the world. Other gas projects include the manufacture of downstream derivatives, and a proposed investment of US\$2.5 billion in a complex for the manufacture of glass and Photovoltaic (PV) Cells.

For renewable energy, the government has approved incentives for projects requiring the importation of equipment for wind and solar initiatives. Incentives include the removal of import duties, zero rating for VAT purposes, wear and tear allowances and tax allowances. Capital subsidies, grants, rebates, investment and other tax credits are being offered to encourage the development of the renewable energy sector. It is believed that these incentives will help develop the government's Home Energy Self Sufficiency (HESS) program allowing homeowners to invest in small scale wind turbines and PV Systems. The government is also offering a number of incentives to encourage the use of Compressed Natural Gas in vehicles and business opportunities in the field may be available shortly.

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American Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.amchamtt.com>

The Energy Chamber of TT: <http://www.southchamber.org>

TT Chamber of Industry and Commerce: <http://www.chamber.org.tt>

Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs: <http://www.energy.gov.tt/>

Central Statistical Office: <http://www.cso.gov.tt/>

## Food Processing and Packaging

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The food processing and packaging equipment sector is experiencing moderate growth. Activities include the manufacture of margarines, coconut oil and soybean oil, which require importation of processing and packaging machinery and equipment. There are several companies processing fruit juices, peas and beans, bakery products, disposable packaging for restaurants, aromatic bitters and alcoholic beverages. Within these sub-sectors, competition comes from Italy, Germany, Canada and Korea. There is some re-exporting to other CARICOM countries.

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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The best prospects include food processing machinery and parts, equipment for distilling spirits, and machinery for filtering and purifying water. The increase in agro-industrial activities in the country has increased demand for food processing and packaging equipment.

### Opportunities

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Opportunities may exist for U.S. companies to increase their export of equipment, especially for canning agricultural products.

### Web Resources

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American Chamber of Commerce: [www.amchamtt.com](http://www.amchamtt.com)  
TT Chamber of Industry and Commerce: [www.chamber.org.tt](http://www.chamber.org.tt)  
Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association: [www.ttma.com](http://www.ttma.com)  
Central Statistical Office: <http://www.cso.gov.tt/>

## Automotive Parts and Accessories

### Overview

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The importation of automotive parts and service equipment is moderate in Trinidad and Tobago. Most vehicles are imported from Japan and Europe. Because TT is right-hand drive, models and parts often differ from those sold for U.S. versions. However, because of proximity to the U.S. and brand familiarity, distributors prefer U.S. sources when they can get matching parts, supplies and accessories.

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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Vehicle tires with HS code 401.11.000 and 401.12.000 are listed in the top 100 items imported into TT. Motorcar batteries also represent a business opportunity. Although a local company, Automotive Components Ltd., manufactures batteries, a large number are also imported. Lubricants and other accessories, like care products, lights and other parts, are possible opportunities for U.S. exporters. TT auto dealers are showing increasing interest in the annual automotive after-market show held in the U.S.

Over the past several years, stiff competition in the automotive industry resulted in lower prices and better packages to consumers. A steady increase in imports of inexpensive Japanese and European used cars, which now account for 40 percent of car sales in TT, have forced new car dealers to increase their offerings of vehicles and services. However, fraud in the used car industry is prevalent. Due to poor government standards and lax enforcement, the flood of "roll-on-roll-off" used cars from Japan in the last several years includes many vehicles that require repairs to be road-worthy (by U.S. standards), but are licensed without proper inspection.

### Opportunities

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A dealership in Port of Spain began selling new Chevrolet models in 2004. Its success could be a barometer for future demand for American vehicles and parts. Ford vehicles have a secure share of the local new car market. Otherwise, opportunities exist for U.S. manufacturers of parts usable in a variety of Japanese and Korean models.

### Web Resources

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American Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.amchamtt.com>

TT Chamber of Industry and Commerce: <http://www.chamber.org.tt>

Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association: <http://www.ttma.com>

TT Bureau of Standards: <http://www.ttbs.org.tt>

## Telecommunications

### Overview

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Over the past few years, Trinidad and Tobago's telecommunications equipment sector has grown steadily. This growth is fuelled in part by the expansion program of Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT), TT's dominant telecom services provider. The switching and transport infrastructure are both 100% digital. The transport network comprises primarily fiber optic-based systems supported by microwave radio systems. Key customers include banking and insurance, petroleum and energy-based industries, government and tourism.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GOTT) opened long-distance and cellular service markets several years ago. Competition exists in the paging, trunked radio, value-added services, cable television, television and radio broadcasting, and satellite services markets. There are now 21 radio stations, three local television stations, two cable-TV service providers and a local franchise of DirecTV. There are six Internet service providers apart from TSTT, serving a market that is estimated to grow from significantly over the next several years.

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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The best sales prospects in telecommunications equipment include telephonic switching apparatus and parts, cellular equipment, reception apparatus for color television and transmission apparatus.

### Opportunities

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TSTT rolled out a GSM mobile network to supplant earlier TDMA technology in 2005. Its TT\$500 million (US\$80 million) investment in GSM, the world's most popular cellular technology, was a major step toward modernizing the country's telecommunications sector. Digicel received its license in late 2005. Digicel competes with TSTT to provide cellular services. TSTT's bmobile and Digicel remain the country's largest cellular service providers. The six companies that received concessions in 2005 to offer long-distance services continually require equipment to maintain and expand their businesses. Demand for cellular technology and internet access in TT seems insatiable, and some portions of the country have yet to go wireless. The TT Telecommunications Authority publishes an annual economic report full of useful information.

### Web Resources

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American Chamber of Commerce: [www.amchamtt.com](http://www.amchamtt.com)

Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago: <http://www.tatt.org.tt/>

## Computers and Peripherals

### Overview

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The use of computers is widespread in Trinidad and Tobago, both in government offices and private enterprise. Businesses have recognized the need for automation and have transformed their operations. Many financial institutions provide special loans to purchasers of computer equipment. Libraries, schools and other public institutions are becoming increasingly computerized and computer usage among teens and children is increasing due to the government's gifting of laptops to all students entering the secondary education level.

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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Internet usage is expected to soar in the next 5 years. As computers become cheaper, the computer penetration rate is expected to grow significantly, with estimates of 900,000 computer owners in TT within five years. The convergence of new technologies that use cell phones and direct satellite to connect to the Internet will also increase the popularity of the internet.

### Opportunities

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Software development is a promising emerging sector in TT. There are approximately 50 companies in this sector, mainly developers of internal business applications tailored to the needs of individual companies. TT developers have exported pension administration, payroll and human resource software throughout the Caribbean; these exports account for the bulk of their revenue.

### Web Resources

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American Chamber of Commerce: [www.amchamtt.com](http://www.amchamtt.com)  
TT Chamber of Industry and Commerce: [www.chamber.org.tt](http://www.chamber.org.tt)  
Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association: [www.ttma.com](http://www.ttma.com)  
FastForward Secretariat: <http://www.fastforward.tt/>

## Construction

### Overview

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Government and private sector projects have pushed Trinidad and Tobago's construction sector to near capacity in recent years, but stalling in 2010. The construction techniques and materials used generally vary from those used in the U.S. Residential homes are commonly constructed from concrete blocks, and industrial buildings use steel and concrete. The new trend is that roofs are also framed in steel. Prefabricated buildings are not popular in TT; imports of prefabricated buildings have not exceeded \$2 million in each of the last four years. Less lumber is also being used in construction in TT. The construction and quarrying industry contracted in 2009 and 2010 with most major construction project completed or near completion, and slow-down of private and public construction projects, due in part to the transition of power following the May 2010 election.

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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Central Statistical Office data indicate that imports over the last few years consisted mostly of mobile lifting frames on tires (842.61.200), other elevators/conveyors, bucket type (842.83.200) other elevators and conveyors (842.83.900), front end shovel loaders ((842.95.100), and parts for moving and grading machinery (843.14.910). In addition, fixtures and fittings, roofing material, plumbing material and equipment, and kitchen and bath supplies are in great demand. The demand for prefabricated buildings is low. There is demand also for lumber, hardware products, and piping, tubing and engineering services.

### Opportunities

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There are several ongoing projects in TT that will affect the growing need for heavy construction equipment in the immediate future. Plans for construction of new petrochemical and metals plants may increase demand for heavy construction equipment. The GOTT, under the direction of the Housing Development Corporation (HDC), has pledged to see 10,000 housing starts each year for ten years. In addition, urban areas are expanding, and new office buildings and upscale housing developments are under construction in Port of Spain and elsewhere. A recent loan of US\$1.5 million from the InterAmerican Development Bank, however, is targeted at several construction sectors and may provide a substantial stimulus to the industry in 2011 and 2012.

## Web Resources

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American Chamber of Commerce: [www.amchamtt.com](http://www.amchamtt.com)

TT Chamber of Industry and Commerce: [www.chamber.org.tt](http://www.chamber.org.tt)

Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association: [www.ttma.com](http://www.ttma.com)

Central Statistical Office: <http://www.cso.gov.tt>

Ministry of Housing: <http://www.housing.gov.tt/>



## Tourism

### Overview

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On average, the number of tourists visiting Trinidad and Tobago increases yearly, despite a drop in 2010. Most visitors are from the U.S. and Europe. Many TT nationals also visit the U.S. on an annual basis for vacation, with leading destinations including New York, Florida, and Atlanta. Tourism is a major generator of employment, an increasingly important source of foreign exchange. The Tourism Development Act was amended in 2005 to provide tax holidays and other incentives to investors with tourism projects. Tourism has been emphasized as a key sector for development and investment by the People's Partnership government, yet the distribution and restaurant sector should contract from 10.6 percent in 2009 to 10 percent in 2010. Hotels and guesthouses are expected to maintain 0.2 percent of the GDP in 2010.

There are sharp contrasts in the nature of the tourism industry between the two islands. Tobago has development potential as a center for leisure tourism, with an emphasis on the higher-yielding luxury end of the market, ecotourism and scuba diving.

For Trinidad, business visitors are an important market segment. Cultural tourism centers on vibrant year-round creative activity as well as the annual Carnival, which has excellent growth potential. During the Carnival season (six weeks preceding Ash Wednesday), visitors come from North America and elsewhere to "jump up" with local revelers. There are also several successful nature centers and lodges on coastal and mountain sites, with room for further eco-tourism development. A marine services industry on Trinidad provides service to the yachting and marine community, as international yacht owners seek shelter in local marinas during the Atlantic hurricane season each year from June through November, taking advantage of Trinidad's geographic location south of the hurricane belt.

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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Some of the advantages for investing in tourism include the following:

Most inputs for construction industry available locally: Low-cost mooring, haul-out and storage for yachts, with boat repair facilities; Lower insurance rates because TT is south of the hurricane belt; Excellent beach-front, city and eco-tourism sites; Sophisticated financial environment with no exchange controls; Tax exemption for 5-10 years; Accelerated depreciation of equipment; Capital allowance for approved capital expenditure; Free repatriation of capital and dividends; Carryover of losses during the tax exemption period; Tax exemption for interest on approved loans for a maximum period of 10 years; Customs and excise duty exemption on building materials and hotel equipment; Double taxation relief where applicable.

## **Opportunities**

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Opportunities for U.S. firms exist in the following areas: hotel operator; hotel management services; tourism consultants; travel agency/tour operator services; institutional tourism promotion services; destination management services; entertainment industry.

## **Web Resources**

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Tourism Development Company, Ltd. Trinidad and Tobago: <http://www.tdc.co.tt/>

## **Agricultural Sector**

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Although data on domestic production and thus on total market size is unavailable, Trinidad and Tobago's market for consumer-oriented and seafood products presents considerable opportunities for U.S. suppliers. While local food processing is more developed than in most other Caribbean countries, Trinidad and Tobago remains dependent on the importation of the full range of food products to satisfy local demand. Thus, opportunities exist for U.S. suppliers of practically all consumer-oriented and seafood products. According to U.S. trade data, in 2010 the United States exported to Trinidad and Tobago record levels of: poultry meat (\$22.4 million); dairy products (\$18.1 million); snacks (\$17.8 million); red meats, fresh/chilled/frozen (\$13.9 million); eggs and products (\$11.3); processed fruit and vegetables (\$9.8 million); fruit and vegetable juices (\$8.4 million); pet foods (\$7.8 million); breakfast cereals (\$6.1 million); seafood (\$4.4 million); and tree nuts (\$3.3 million). Vegetable oils for further processing, particularly soybean oil, is also a growth category for U.S. suppliers.

## **Best Prospects**

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Consumer-oriented and seafood products

## **Resources**

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Katherine Nishiura  
Director  
Caribbean Basin Agricultural Trade Office (CBATO)  
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Email: [caribbeanbasinato@usda.gov](mailto:caribbeanbasinato@usda.gov)  
Website: <http://www.cbato.fas.usda.gov>

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## Chapter 5: Trade Regulations, Customs and Standards

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- [Trade Barriers](#)
- [Import Requirements and Documentation](#)
- [U.S. Export Controls](#)
- [Temporary Entry](#)
- [Labeling and Marking Requirements](#)
- [Prohibited and Restricted Imports](#)
- [Customs Regulations and Contact Information](#)
- [Standards](#)
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### Import Tariffs

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Effective September 8, 2009, the excise and import duties on tobacco products from both Common Market and extra-regional origin was increased by 15 percent. Excise duty on locally manufactured rum, beer and other alcoholic products was increased by 15 percent, while import duty on rum, beer and other alcoholic products for Common market origin was increased by 15 percent and from extra-regional sources by 30 percent. The CARICOM Common External Tariff (CET) carries a CET rate of zero to five percent on virtually all other imported items currently. A limited number of items falling within the zero to five percent duty range, e.g. air conditioning equipment, refrigerators, tanks, cans, drums, etc. will continue to carry a CET. For certain products, the CET rates go up to 40% (some of these appear under the following Harmonized System (HS) headings: 04, 08, 15, 17, 20, and 87). Customs value is based on the Cost, Insurance, and Freight (CIF) value of the goods at the time of import and includes all other foreign costs.

### Trade Barriers

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A 15 percent Value Added Tax (VAT) is imposed on the CIF value of dutiable goods.

### Import Requirements and Documentation

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A customs broker is required when importing and exporting commercial goods. Upon landing of goods, supporting documents must be submitted to customs authorities and relevant duties paid before goods may be cleared from customs. Bureaucratic inefficiency and occasional inflexibility in regulation interpretation often prolong the custom clearance process. Shipping documents can be sent for customs clearance on

the date the goods are shipped, saving days of processing time, especially for goods shipped by sea. Customs documents can now be obtained and processed online on the new website <https://www.ttbizlink.gov.tt/>.

Importation of certain items may require an import license issued by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. It is advisable to inquire whether a license is required prior to shipping the goods (see Prohibited and Restricted Imports at: [TT Importing and Exporting](#)).

The following documents are required for imports to Trinidad and Tobago:

1. CARICOM Area Invoice provided by the supplier.
2. Supplier's Invoice
3. Copy of Bill of Lading or Airway Bill
4. Declaration on the C75 or C76 form signed by the importer
5. Certificate of Origin (provided by supplier)
6. Certificate of Health/Sanitary Certificate (if required)
7. Import License (if required)

#### **Export Requirements:**

1. Invoice (showing the local cost)
2. Export License (See Consolidated List of Licensable Exports below).
3. Certificate of origin (Items not manufactured locally)

#### **U.S. Export Controls**

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Exporters should consult with the following federal agencies to determine if an export license is required:

Department of Commerce: Items used for both military/strategic purposes and commercial applications.

Department of State, Directorate of Defense Trade Controls (DDTC): Defense services and U.S. Munitions List articles.

Department of Energy: Nuclear technology and technical data for nuclear power, special nuclear materials, and natural gas.

#### **Temporary Entry**

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Temporary entry of goods to be re-exported is allowed with advance arrangement. A deposit or bond covering the duty liability of such items must be posted with Customs prior to the item's entry. Items to be re-exported must be clearly identified by a mark such as a serial or part number. Upon re-exportation, the equivalent of ten percent of

the duty liability becomes due for every three months the item remained in Trinidad and Tobago.

## **Labeling and Marking Requirements**

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Labels must be in English and must indicate the country of origin. Labels on garments must indicate size, fiber content and either the name or address of the manufacturer or the registered brand name. For prepackaged foods, the labels on the main panel of the package must include the common name, brand or trade name, correct declaration of the net contents of the package in terms of weight, volume or number. Any panel except the bottom of the package must include a complete list of ingredients in the descending order of proportion; the name and address of the manufacturer or person preparing the food and its country of preparation or origin; a declaration by name of any added Class II, Class III or Class IV preservative, e.g. sodium benzoate; any added food color or flavoring preparation; expiry date or other date mark; any applicable storage instructions; preparation instructions, where applicable; and instructions for safe handling, where applicable. Any panel, including the panel at the bottom of the package must the batch or lot number; and any registration number will be required. Please note that standards, labeling, testing and certification, to the extent that they are required, do not usually hinder U.S. exports. For additional information contact Chemistry Food and Drugs at Email: [cfdd@cariblink.net](mailto:cfdd@cariblink.net) or Fax: (868) 623-2477.

## **Prohibited and Restricted Imports**

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### Prohibited imports:

- Illegal narcotics
- Certain knives, firearms, weapons and explosives (N.B. Firearms that can be imported require import permit and firearms license from Commissioner of Police)
- Seditious, indecent or obscene publications, articles or matter
- Live Christmas trees (e.g. pine)
- Animals: monkeys and mongoose

### Restricted Imports (requires an import license):

- 2, 4, 5-Trichlorophenyl (2, 4, 5-T)
- Aldrin, Dieldrin and Endrin
- Animal oils, fats and greases, unrefined
- Chlordimeform
- Coconut in all forms; including coconut seedlings, copra, desiccated coconut, coconut milk, and coconut cream (excluding coconut oil)
- Copra
- Dibromochloropropane (DBCP)
- Dichlorodiphenyl trichloroethane (DDT)
- Ethylene dibromide (EDB)
- Fatty acids and solid residues from the treatment of oils and fats
- Fresh fish (live or dead), chilled or frozen: Shrimp, Lobster, Crabmeat

- Lead Arsenate
- Left-hand drive motor vehicles imported under section 45(A) of the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01
- Live poultry
- Oil seed cake, meal and other vegetable oil residues
- Oilseeds, beans, nuts
- Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) (Tariff Heading No. 2903) and mixtures containing ODS
- Equipment requiring the use of ODS (Tariff Heading No. 8414, 8415) - Refrigerators, freezers and other refrigerating or freezing equipment, heat pumps and their parts for domestic and commercial use (Tariff Heading No. 84:18), air or vacuum pumps and compressors and their parts, dehumidifiers, air conditioning machines/units and their parts
- Paper for wrapping tobacco or cigarette
- Parathion, ethyl
- Pentachlorophenol (PCP)
- Ships and boats (under 250 tons)
- Thallium and its salts
- Used right-hand drive garbage compactors exceeding 15 tons (15000kg) MGW
- Used right-hand drive vehicles
- Vegetable fats

## Customs Regulations and Contact Information

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### Customs Contact Information

Customs Act, Chapter 78:01, First Schedule (Common External Tariff) Effective January 1, 2004. [Customs Act 78:01](#)

Customs and Excise Division: Tel: (868) 625-3311 Ext. 335/8 (Long Room; Fax: (868) 625-6129.

Ministry of Trade and Industry, Trade Licence Unit: (868) Tel: 674-3545; Fax: (868) 675-5465.

## Standards

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## Overview

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The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) is responsible for all trade standards for products and services except those pertaining to food, drugs, cosmetics items and medical devices, which the Chemistry, Food and Drug Division of the Ministry of Health monitors. The TTBS uses the ISO 9000 series of standards and is a member of ISONET. The government is not a party to the WTO Standards Code.

Use of either the metric or English system of weights and measures is allowed in TT. Products that meet U.S., U.K. or Canadian standards will be accepted by the TTBS.

## Standards Organizations

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The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) is the National Standards Body of Trinidad and Tobago. It was established in an Act of Parliament (No. 38 of 1972), and now operates under the Standards Act 18 of 1997, which mandates it to be the national standards body, the national quality certifying body, and the national laboratory accrediting body. The TTBS is a full member of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the Caribbean Common Market Standards Council (CCMSC), and the Pan American Standards Commission (COPANT).

The TTBS is managed by the Standards Council, which is appointed by the Minister of Trade and Industry. An Executive Director, Secretary (Administration), Head of Division, and Manager of Units control the day-to-day activities.

The Standardization Division develops national standards for use in TT. A standard goes through three stages in its development.

- *Technical Committee Stage*: where a draft document is developed by interested parties from various sectors of the society.

- *Public Comment Stage*: where availability of the draft is notified to the public and comments invited within a specified time.

- *Declaration Stage*: where comments are integrated into the final document that is then published as a declared national standard after TTBS approval.

The final standard may be declared voluntary or compulsory at the discretion of the TTBS based upon the recommendations of the technical committee responsible for the development of the standard. Compulsory standards are declared by the Minister responsible for trade and industry by Order published in the Gazette.

The Division also offers consultancy in the investigation and interpretation of specifications and in the preparation of industry and company standards.

The following are the main subject groups within the International Classification of Standards scheme (ICS).

- Agriculture
- Ceramics
- Chemical Technology
- Clothing Industry
- Company Organization and Management
- Construction Materials and Building
- Electrical Engineering
- Electronics



- Environment and Health Protection Safety
- Fluid Systems and Components for General Use
- Food Technology
- Housekeeping, Entertainment, Sports
- Generalities, Terminology, Documentation
- Information Technology, Office Equipment
- Manufacturing Engineering
- Materials Handling Equipment
- Mechanical Systems and Components for General Use
- Metallurgy
- Metrology and Measurement, Physical Phenomena
- Packaging and Distribution of Goods
- Paint and Color Industries
- Paper Technology
- Petroleum and Related Technologies
- Precision Mechanics, Jewelry
- Road Vehicle Engineering
- Rubber and Plastics Industries
- Telecommunications
- Testing
- Textile and Leather Technology
- Wood Technology

### **NIST Notify U.S. Service**

Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other Member countries.

**Notify U.S.** is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that can affect your access to international markets. Register online at Internet URL:

<http://www.nist.gov/notifyus/>

### **Conformity Assessment**

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TTBS has established an Implementation Division for monitoring both imported and locally manufactured products to meet the requirements of compulsory standards. A sample of a new product line is examined while every single used product is inspected. The products presently inspected in Trinidad and Tobago are:

- Garment and Textiles
- Tires
- Electrical and electronic products
- Footwear
- Lead Acid Starter Batteries for Automobiles
- Bleach

The products are inspected at the three main ports of entry:

- Point Lisas
- Port of Spain
- Piarco Airport

The Testing Division of the Bureau includes five laboratories, which are equipped to service both the private and public industrial and manufacturing sectors. Testing services are provided in the following categories:

#### Electrical Products

The Electrical Products Laboratory provides electronic and electrical performance testing and measurement services.

#### Chemical Products

The Chemical Products Laboratory provides analytical and testing services to the chemical sector and related industries.

#### Fiber Products

The Fiber Products Laboratory provides testing and analytical services to the garment, footwear, and related industries. Paper products have also been included in the list of items tested routinely.

#### Materials Testing

The Materials Testing Laboratory is equipped to perform mechanical tests on ferrous and non-ferrous metals, construction materials, ceramics and surface coatings.

The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards is the National Laboratory Accrediting organization. The Laboratory Quality Improvement Program (LABQUIP) will accredit the labs.

### Product Certification

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The TTBS uses the ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 certification system and has its own set of certification rules.

TT is a part of a mutual recognition agreement with the ISO's Laboratory Competency Program.

The Certification Division can certify a company's quality system to the ISO 9000 Quality Assurance Standards and/or its product to national standards. It can also grant exporters a certificate of conformity or export worthiness for a particular batch or product volume. Using highly trained auditors and documented procedures, it can determine and verify if systems or products conform to established criteria or specifications. The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards is the only indigenous CARICOM ISO 9000 third party registrar.

### Accreditation

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The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards is the only locally accredited body. However, the Bureau does not have jurisdiction over foreign accreditation bodies that visit TT to certify laboratories. The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) will accredit technical labs in Trinidad and Tobago and has this right without interference from the TTBS.

## **Publication of Technical Regulations**

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There are 60 classifications for technical regulations, which are part of the compulsory standards.

The TTBS informs the WTO of changes in the standards. The National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST), a non-regulatory agency within the U.S. Commerce Department's Technology Administration, is also informed of recent changes. TTBS is the inquiring point for agencies and organizations that need information about standards and regulations in Trinidad and Tobago.

## **Labeling and Marking**

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Most standards for labeling and marking are compulsory, while others are voluntary.

## **Contacts**

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Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards: <http://www.ttbs.org.tt>

Embassy POC: Economic/Commercial Officer: Tel: (868) 822-5918; Fax: (868) 822-5994

## **Trade Agreements**

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U.S./Trinidad and Tobago Bilateral Investment Treaty  
(Signed September 26, 1994; entered into force December 26, 1996)

U.S./Trinidad and Tobago Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Protection of Intellectual Property Rights (entered into force 1994)

## **Web Resources**

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Ministry of Trade and Industry: <http://www.tradeind.gov.tt>

TTBizLink: <https://www.ttbizlink.gov.tt/>

U.S. Department of State: <http://www.state.gov>

Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards: <http://www.ttbs.org.tt>  
Trinidad and Tobago Government on line: <http://www.ttconnect.gov.tt>  
Trinidad and Tobago Importing and Exporting: [Importing and Exporting](#)

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## Chapter 6: Investment Climate

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### Openness to Foreign Investment

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The Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GOTT) actively encourages foreign direct investment in almost all sectors. Generally speaking, there are no restrictions or disincentives to investment. The Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom for 2010 ranked Trinidad and Tobago (TT) tenth in the Western Hemisphere and 55th out of 179 countries worldwide, citing overdependence on the petrochemical industry and an opaque regulatory system as the key negative factors. TT ranks 86th out of 133 countries evaluated by the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index. The Global Competitiveness Report identified crime, government bureaucracy, a poor work ethic, and corruption as the four key issues that precipitated a drop in ranking from the previous year.

Foreign ownership of companies is permitted and welcomed under the Foreign Investment Act (1990). Among the myriad U.S. companies operating in TT are a commercial bank, several air-courier services, three airlines, and one insurance company. U.S. companies have interests in one electric power company, a number of oil and gas operations, petrochemical plants, and a desalination plant. American oil services companies are well represented in Trinidad, as are U.S.-based retail food franchises.

The availability and reliability of natural gas supply has attracted much of the investment in heavy industry to date. However, the latest Ryder Scott natural gas audit provoked

questions about the sustainability of gas-based industrial expansion. Released in August 2009, the audit showed a decline in the country's proven gas reserves from 16.99 trillion cubic feet (tcf) in December 2007 to 15.37 tcf in December 2008. The audit found, however, an increase in the nation's probable gas reserves from 7,883 billion cubic feet (bcf) and an increase in possible gas reserves from an estimated 5,888 bcf to 6,286 bcf over the same time period. In response to the audit, the GOTT offered seven shallow, mid-depth, and deep offshore blocks for competitive bidding in 2010. The new bid round was met with some enthusiasm and considered a success, even though it received relatively little global attention and few international bidders. The government awarded bids for the shallow and mid-depth water blocks in December, 2010, and will conclude the bid round for deep water blocks on February 18, 2011. The new government that came to power in May 2010 announced it would revise the energy sector tax regime to further incentivize gas field exploration and development.

A change in government after May 2010 parliamentary elections resulted in a slow-down in the execution of pending and new government contracts, several involving U.S.-based and foreign firms, as oversight boards and commissions were reconstituted slowly over several months. By early 2011 the pace of contract approval processes had improved, but progress on some complicated tenders and contract renewals or negotiations remained stalled, to the frustration of a number of foreign investors and joint-venture partners.

#### Judicial System:

The TT judicial system upholds the sanctity of contracts and generally provides a level playing field for foreign investors involved in court matters. However, due to the backlog of cases, there can be major delays in the process. As a result, it is imperative that those investing here sign enforceable contracts and use local attorneys.

#### Bilateral Investment Treaty:

The Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) between the United States and TT came into force in 1996. The BIT covers the following areas, with all provisions applying reciprocally to the United States and TT:

--Treatment of Investment: Requires that the treatment of foreign investments is no less favorable than that accorded to domestic investments ("national treatment").

--Expropriation: Prohibits expropriation or nationalization of an investment without just compensation.

--Compensation for Damages: Requires national treatment for investments suffering losses from war and similar events.

--Transfers: Permits financial transfers relating to investments to be made freely and without delay into and out of each country's territory.

--Performance Requirements: Prohibits performance requirements as a condition for investment.

--Alien Entry: Liberalizes certain visa regimes relating to entry, sojourn and employment of aliens for establishment and operation of investments of substantial capital amounts.

--Dispute Settlement: Provides for dispute resolution alternatives, including binding arbitration.

#### Investment Limitations:

Currently, the applicable "CARICOM and Foreign Investment Act of 1990" extends national treatment to CARICOM citizens but does not guarantee the same rights to other foreigners. In the absence of a government-granted waiver, the law limits foreign equity participation in local companies to the extent that a foreign investor is permitted to own 100 percent of the share capital in a private company, but a license is required to own more than 30 percent of the share capital of a public company. The Foreign Investment Act also limits foreign ownership of land to one acre for residential purposes and five acres for trade purposes without a license. In the past, waivers on corporate equity and land ownership restrictions have been freely granted.

License applications are subject to review and approval/denial by the Ministry of Finance (in Trinidad) or Tobago House of Assembly (in Tobago) according to the following guidelines:

--Residential purchases (Trinidad or Tobago): Where the area of land to be acquired is more than ONE ACRE. Residential property licenses will be granted for only one parcel of land per application. Foreign investors are required to submit separate applications for each subsequent residential purchase.

--Commercial purchases (Trinidad or Tobago): Where the area of land to be acquired is more than FIVE ACRES.

--Tobago only: All foreign investors seeking to acquire property in Tobago (regardless of size).

The approving offices (MOF/THA) are officially mandated to approve/deny property license applications within twenty (20) working days, however bureaucratic delays are not uncommon.

Foreign investors wishing to purchase property in Trinidad or Tobago should ensure that any related contracts remain conditional until s/he receives official notice that the property license has been granted.

#### Government Involvement in Foreign Investment:

In general, the GOTT will only involve itself in foreign investments in which: (1) the investor is seeking government incentives or concessions such as tax holidays, duty-free imports of equipment and materials, or exemption from VAT on inputs; (2) the investor wishes to lease land in one of the government-owned industrial parks, or (3) when a planned activity requires a license, such as mining or drilling.

Nationals and non-nationals are generally treated equally with respect to obtaining licenses. Bureaucratic delays in approval of investment packages can be frustrating for

investors. These generally are the result of negotiations for a memorandum of understanding or framework agreement and incentives or, in the case of petrochemical investors, negotiations for favorable natural gas prices. Environmental approval for large industrial projects is governed by the Environmental Management Authority through the issuance of a Certificate of Environmental Clearance. This process can be extremely time-consuming, and many projects begin with only outline approval.

#### Telecommunications:

The Telecommunications Act 2001, as amended, came into force in 2004, setting the stage for full liberalization of the sector. The Act places full responsibility for the regulation of the sector with the Telecommunications Authority of TT (TATT), which was officially launched on July 1, 2004. Currently, mobile telephone services are offered by three TT companies: bMobile, Digicel, and Flow.

Concessions were also awarded to seven applicants for international fixed communications, which has facilitated the establishment of off-shore call centers and medical transcription services. In October 2007, the TATT selected companies – Telestar Cable system Limited and Green Dot Limited, for radio spectrum to provide public broadband wireless access (BWA) services.

#### Privatization:

The government has encouraged foreign investment in several state enterprises. In nearly every case, foreign investors have purchased large minority holdings in privatized firms through various arrangements.

TT has seen a trend towards privatization of key sectors since the 1990s, including electrical power generation and postal services. National sugar producer Caroni (1975) Ltd. was replaced by Sugar Manufacturing Company Ltd. in 2003, and then sold in 2006. The majority of the former sugar producing land was subsequently converted to other agricultural projects, and the remainder to housing developments and strategic business development projects, and the industry remains moribund.

### **Conversion and Transfer Policies**

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There are no exchange controls on foreign currency and securities. The repatriation of capital, dividends, interest and other distributions and gains on investment may be freely transacted without limits. The average period for remitting all kinds of investment returns is twenty-four hours.

Since mid-2009, Trinidad and Tobago businesses have reported delays in access to foreign exchange through the banking system. The business community's initially acute concerns have subsided, following large currency infusions by the Central Bank and reassurances from government officials, but access remains tight. Government officials and some bankers have suggested that a perceived shortage of dollars was due in part to a tightening of credit lines for businesses in the heavily import-dependent economy that must now pay cash for more of their orders, and an unwillingness of businesses to pay premiums for advanced orders of dollars through commercial banks.



### Tax on Interest earned by an Individual in TT:

There is no requirement for withholding on interest paid to resident individuals with respect to loans secured by bonds or other similar investment instruments. When the individual is a non-resident, withholding tax is 20 percent, except in cases where treaty relief is available. (The double taxation treaty between the U.S. and TT does not provide for such relief.)

### Remittance of Dividends to a Non-resident:

Where the remittance is in the form of dividends paid to a U.S. individual, the rate of tax is 15 percent of the gross dividend. In the case of a U.S. company owning more than 10 percent of the voting control of a TT company, the rate is 10 percent of the gross dividend. For dividends paid to a U.S. company with less than 10 percent ownership, the rate of tax is 15 percent. In the case of a U.S. resident company having a branch or permanent establishment in TT, branch profit tax would be applicable on a deemed remittance made by the branch. The rate of branch profit tax is 10 percent, levied on the after-tax profits of the branch, minus any reinvestment of such profits (other than in the replacement of fixed assets).

## Expropriation and Compensation

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No expropriation actions have been taken since the 1980s. All prior expropriations were compensated to the satisfaction of the parties involved. There is no indication of policy shifts that might lead to expropriation in the future.

In 2010, the US District Court for the Southern District of New York granted an order to stay a lawsuit brought by a U.S.-based company that produces gas-to-liquid diesel fuels for the transportation fuel industry, against the Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago (Petrotrin). The U.S. firm filed a lawsuit in NY Federal Court against Petrotrin, claiming that Petrotrin, as a government organ, expropriated its property and fraudulently and negligently deprived it of its investments and future earnings in a joint-venture gas-to-liquids plant when it assumed outstanding loans on the joint-venture, ordered a default on the loans and put the joint-venture into receivership. The judge in the matter stayed the suit and ordered the parties to pursue arbitration under terms of the contract.

## Dispute Settlement

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The Trinidad and Tobago High Court of Justice has jurisdiction over all matters involving sums in excess of TT\$15,000 (approx USD 2,400), and can grant equitable relief such as acclamation injunctions and public law remedies. At present there is no reciprocal enforcement of judgments obtained in the United States. These judgments do, however, form the basis of a debt on which the court can rule summarily. The only grounds on which a foreign judgment can be impeached are when: (a) it was obtained by fraud, (b)

its recognition or enforcement would be contrary to public policy, or (c) it was obtained in proceedings contrary to natural justice.

TT is a member of the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), which facilitates conciliation and arbitration of investment disputes between contracting states and nationals of contracting states. TT has also ratified the New York Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards, which facilitates the registration and enforcement of foreign arbitral awards between contracting states. TT courts can refer parties to mediation. A Mediation Board was created with responsibility for certifying mediators and accrediting training programs.

The Bilateral Investment Treaty between the United States and TT allows for alternative dispute resolution measures, including binding arbitration. In 1996, the TT Chamber of Industry and Commerce (TTCIC) launched a Dispute Resolution Center to foster mediation training and hear commercial disputes.

The Environmental Commission, a Superior Court of record, was established by and under the Environmental Management Act 2000. The Act mandates the Commission to encourage and promote alternative dispute resolution, defined as any mechanism for resolving disputes other than by way of litigation. New legislation increasingly provides for mediation as an alternative to litigation in other areas as well.

According to the Bankruptcy Act of 1916 and Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act of 2007, creditors may at any time file a bankruptcy petition in court against an individual or for the closure of a business on the grounds of the debtor's inability to pay its debts. Favorable court judgments can take the form of charges to the debtor's real estate, personal goods, or wages, prevent the debtor from fleeing the jurisdiction or dissipating his/her assets. If it is proved to the satisfaction of the court that the debtor cannot pay its debts, the Companies Act provides for the appointment of a receiver/manager who takes over from the company's board of directors with the objective of managing the business to a state of solvency.

## **Performance Requirements and Incentives**

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There are no performance requirements for investors written into law, but the GOTT strongly encourages, through negotiable incentives, projects that generate employment and foreign exchange; provide training and/or technology transfer; boost exports or reduce imports; have local content; and generally contribute to the welfare of the country. Foreign investment is, however, screened for potential environmental impact.

Foreign investors are eligible for tax holidays and concessions in the manufacturing and hotel industries. Under the Fiscal Incentives Act of 1979 and the Hotel Development Act, both tax and non-tax incentives may be negotiated with the government for investments in the manufacturing, tourism and energy sectors. The government encourages joint ventures between foreign and local corporations. Corporate partners in a joint venture are governed by a joint-venture partnership agreement.

The GOTT has sought to streamline the investment registration system and now permits investors to submit a single application for all the licenses, approvals, concessions and tax benefits necessary to implement a proposed investment project. In practice, however, business representatives have reported delays in establishing businesses in TT.

Foreigners entering Trinidad and Tobago to engage in legitimate trade or occupation may do so without a work permit for a single period not to exceed thirty days within a twelve consecutive month period. To engage in legitimate work for any period in excess of thirty days, a work permit must be obtained from the Ministry of National Security through the proposed employer. This system has created logistical challenges for companies involved in large industrial and energy projects, which frequently need technicians for periods longer than thirty days. Be advised that work permits may be processed electronically on the new TTBizLink website at <https://www.ttbizlink.gov.tt/>.

There are no formal restrictions on the numbers and/or duration of employment of foreign managers brought in to supervise foreign investment projects, an issue that is specifically addressed in the Bilateral Investment Treaty between the United States and TT. However, several foreign firms have alleged that there are inconsistencies in the issuance of long-term work permits. These generally fall into two categories: (1) a permit is not granted to an official of a company that is competing with a local firm, or (2) the authorities threaten not to renew a permit because a foreign firm has not done enough to train and promote a TT national into the position. Some executives of smaller companies have found that their work permits are only approved if they form joint ventures with local firms or set up formal training programs.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs stated publicly at the launch of the TT Local Content Chamber in January 2011 that the government would be proposing new local content policies, including requirements for state-owned energy companies to implement policies that would enhance coal participation in their projects. She also stated that her ministry would form a regulatory unit dedicated to local content measures.

## **Right to Private Ownership and Establishment**

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Private foreign and domestic entities have the right to establish and own business enterprises and engage in remunerative activity. Under the Companies Ordinance and the Foreign Investment Act, a foreign investor may purchase shares in a local corporation, incorporate or set up a branch office in Trinidad and Tobago, or form a joint venture or partnership with a local entity. Businesses may be freely purchased or disposed of. Private enterprises and public enterprises are treated equally with respect to access to markets, credit, and other business operations. The Companies Act, based on the Canadian Corporations Act, came into force in 1997, and was updated in the Companies (Amendment) Act, 1999.

## **Protection of Property Rights**

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Property rights are protected under the constitution and common-law practice. Secured interests in property are recognized and enforced.

Trinidad and Tobago concluded negotiations with the United States on an Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) agreement in 1994. TT's IPR legislation is WTO consistent and considered to be TRIPS-plus, generally providing for intellectual property protection comparable to that in the U.S. TT passed the Copyright Amendment Act in April 2008, which provides the legal basis for TT to ratify the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) Performances Treaty, Phonograms Treaty and Copyright Treaty. The Copyright Act amendment was designed to enhance enforcement by simplifying the process of filing charges, but we have no information regarding the effectiveness of the amendment. Trinidad and Tobago's intellectual property laws may be viewed online at: [www.wipo.int/clea](http://www.wipo.int/clea).

Enforcement of intellectual property rights has improved somewhat with periodic arrests of individuals and seizure and destruction of pirated copies of CDs, copying equipment, etc. Nonetheless, music and video piracy continue to be the most visible and widespread examples of copyright infringement. To address this infringement, GOTT formed a Cabinet level sub-committee to make recommendations for regulating the home video club industry in 2008. Since the election in May 2010, however, a new committee has not been appointed.

In 2007, most cable TV signal piracy in TT ended when Trinidad's main cable TV company, Flow, signed a licensing agreement with HBO-LA to legally distribute HBO-LA programming in Trinidad. In late 2008, CBS signed a licensing agreement with Flow to allow the cable company to show all of its news, sports, and dramatic productions on local stations. The holders of music rights, however, continued to complain in 2010 that FLOW was not properly paying royalties for music rights on both television and audio channels.

## **Transparency of Regulatory System**

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The Companies Ordinance and the Foreign Investment Act, in general, govern foreign investments. Except as noted elsewhere in this report, these Acts carry few restrictive clauses. The U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain is not aware of any investment proposal being denied outright. Under the Act, a proposal can only be denied if it is illegal, contrary to public morals, or environmentally unsound. However, Government inaction on a proposal may have the same effect as outright denial.

Foreign investors have complained about a lack of transparency and delays in the investment approval process. Complaints focus on a perceived lack of delineation of authority for final investment approvals among the various ministries and agencies that may be involved in a project. Some projects have been delayed for several years and some prospective investors have abandoned Trinidad and Tobago as a result.

Certificate of Environmental Clearance Rules that came into effect in 2001 have helped to clear up uncertainty over environmental impact assessments by placing the environmental approval authority for most projects under the jurisdiction of the

Environmental Management Authority (EMA). The following categories of projects require environmental clearance:

- Agriculture/horticulture
- Electricity Generation, Transmission and Distribution
- Engineering Operations
- Food and Beverage Industry
- Heavy Manufacturing Industries
- Light Manufacturing Industries
- Metal Smelting and Reforming
- Mineral Mining and Processing
- Oil and Gas Exploitation
- Telecommunications;
- Tourism and Recreational Development
- Transport Systems Infrastructure
- Waste Management
- Water and Sewage Systems
- Storage and Warehousing
- Other Service-Oriented Activities
- Hillside Development

New water pollution rules came into effect in 2007. A 2007 amendment to the water rules exempts quarry operations smaller than 150 hectares from obtaining a Certificate of Environmental Clearance, but still requires oversight during the land clearing process. With the latest amendment, no oversight is required for land clearing or quarry operations on less than 150 hectares of land. Air pollution rules are to be implemented in the near future. See EMA's website for details: <http://www.ema.co.tt>.

## **Efficient Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment**

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Trinidad and Tobago has well-developed capital markets. A full range of credit instruments is available to the private sector, including a small but well-developed stock market. There are no restrictions on borrowing by foreign investors. However, local credit is expensive by U.S. standards due to high commercial bank reserve requirements. Loans in foreign currency are much cheaper, and businesses can sometimes negotiate even lower rates.

The legal, regulatory and accounting systems governing credit markets are, on the whole, effective and transparent, although there has been some public discussion of the need to tighten regulations in the insurance industry. The Insurance Act of 1980 (amended in 1996) and Securities Industry Act of 1995 are geared towards improving the market's transparency. International accounting firms are represented in TT, including Pannell, Kerr Forster, KPMG, and Ernst & Young.

Both chambers of TT's Parliament passed the Financial Institutions Act in 2008, meant to replace the Financial Institutions Act of 1993. The new Act modernizes regulation of banks, insurance companies, and other financial institutions, and provides penalties up to US\$800,000 and five years in jail for operating without a license from the Central Bank. Directors and officers of a company violating the Act are subject to joint and

several liabilities. The Act was a key element in the GOTT efforts to improve the regulatory framework for launching an International Financial Center in Port of Spain. Completion of the financial center building coincided with the global economic downturn and has not attracted the mix of financial services providers and regional trading floors that were expected, and plans have changed drastically as the project has been renamed the International Business Center (IBC). The GOTT hopes that the IBC will be a catalyst for future growth in the financial sector as the global economy rebounds and plans to begin restructuring the plan in January 2011.

With the Fair Trading Act of 2006, TT adopted antitrust legislation that regulates mergers, anti-competitive agreements, and monopolies and provides for the establishment of a Fair Trade Commission. Under the Act, merging enterprises are required to apply to the Commission for permission to merge if their assets exceed TT\$50 million. The Act requires the Commission to make a determination within one month. However, as of late 2010 the Commission had not yet been launched and implementing regulations were not yet promulgated.

The TT stock exchange operates a takeover and merger code for companies listed on the local stock exchange. The government has established a securities and exchange commission for the purpose of supervising and regulating the securities market and market actors. Foreign investors must obtain a license from the Ministry of Finance before they can legally acquire more than thirty percent of a publicly held company. Cross-shareholding arrangements that would inhibit foreign investment through mergers and acquisitions are uncommon outside the financial services sector. The banking system is considered sound.

There are no laws authorizing firms to adopt articles of incorporation that limit or prohibit foreign investment, participation or control. The government and private sector do not seek to restrict foreign participation in industry standards-setting organizations.

## **Competition from State Owned Enterprises**

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The government has established several SOEs intended to fill gaps in key sectors. Local SOEs are governed by independent Boards of Directors. The most prominent of which, the Urban Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago (UDECOTT), National Infrastructure Development Company (NIDCO), National Gas Company (NGC), and Petrotrin, are responsible for large-scale construction or oil/natural gas production. The government oversaw a significant construction boom associated with the high market price of oil and natural gas from 2007-2009.

The GOTT remains heavily involved in the energy sector through several SOEs that operate Trinidad's oil and natural gas refineries, natural gas distribution network, and the marketing of refined products. The largest of these companies, Petrotrin, has interests in both oil and gas exploration and production, and manages a leasehold program for small-scale, on-shore production. In 2008, international credit-ranking agency Moody's downgraded Petrotrin from 'stable' to 'negative' citing the state-owned company's elevated debt levels. Previous reports that the government was considering a proposal to merge the various state-owned energy companies into a single, more globally competitive entity have not gained traction.



TT established the Heritage and Stabilization Fund in 2007 as the country's sole sovereign wealth fund. Its stated purpose is to save and invest surplus petroleum revenues (in excess of 10% of estimated revenues) to sustain public expenditure capacity during periods of revenue downturn.

The Fund's day-to-day operations are managed by the Central Bank and governed by a five member Board, including one representative of the Central Bank and one Finance Ministry representative. The 2007 legislation mandates that the Fund be maintained in US dollars and prohibits domestic investment or petroleum -related investments.

## **Corporate Social Responsibility**

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Although not widely implemented, there is broad awareness of corporate social responsibility principles among large and mid-size businesses in TT, with a growing level of awareness among consumers as companies develop CSR efforts in various local communities. Foreign and mid- to large-sized local enterprises tend to follow generally accepted CSR principles. CSR is increasingly emphasized by influential local business organizations including the American Chamber of Commerce, Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and the TT South Chamber of Commerce.

## **Political Violence**

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There has been no serious incident of political violence since an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1990.

## **Corruption**

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Corruption, including bribery, raises the costs and risks of doing business. Corruption has a corrosive impact on both market opportunities overseas for U.S. companies and the broader business climate. It also deters international investment, stifles economic growth and development, distorts prices, and undermines the rule of law.

It is important for U.S. companies, irrespective of their size, to assess the business climate in the relevant market in which they will be operating or investing, and to have an effective compliance program or measures to prevent and detect corruption, including foreign bribery. U.S. individuals and firms operating or investing in foreign markets should take the time to become familiar with the relevant anticorruption laws of both the foreign country and the United States in order to properly comply with them, and where appropriate, they should seek the advice of legal counsel.

The U.S. Government seeks to level the global playing field for U.S. businesses by encouraging other countries to take steps to criminalize their own companies' acts of corruption, including bribery of foreign public officials, by requiring them to uphold their

obligations under relevant international conventions. A U. S. firm that believes a competitor is seeking to use bribery of a foreign public official to secure a contract should bring this to the attention of appropriate U.S. agencies, as noted below.

**U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act:** In 1977, the United States enacted the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), which makes it unlawful for a U.S. person, and certain foreign issuers of securities, to make a corrupt payment to foreign public officials for the purpose of obtaining or retaining business for or with, or directing business to, any person. The FCPA also applies to foreign firms and persons who take any act in furtherance of such a corrupt payment while in the United States. For more detailed information on the FCPA, see the FCPA Lay-Person's Guide at: <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/>

**Other Instruments:** It is U.S. Government policy to promote good governance, including host country implementation and enforcement of anti-corruption laws and policies pursuant to their obligations under international agreements. Since enactment of the FCPA, the United States has been instrumental to the expansion of the international framework to fight corruption. Several significant components of this framework are the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions (OECD Antibribery Convention), the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UN Convention), the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (OAS Convention), the Council of Europe Criminal and Civil Law Conventions, and a growing list of U.S. free trade agreements. Trinidad and Tobago is party to the OAS and UN Conventions, but generally all countries prohibit the bribery and solicitation of their public officials.

**OECD Antibribery Convention:** The OECD Antibribery Convention entered into force in February 1999. As of December 2009, there are 38 parties to the Convention including the United States (see <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/59/13/40272933.pdf>). Major exporters China, India, and Russia are not parties, although the U.S. Government strongly endorses their eventual accession to the Convention. The Convention obligates the Parties to criminalize bribery of foreign public officials in the conduct of international business. The United States meets its international obligations under the OECD Antibribery Convention through the U.S. FCPA. Trinidad and Tobago is not a party to the OECD Convention.

**UN Convention:** The UN Anticorruption Convention entered into force on December 14, 2005, and there are 143 parties to it as of December 2009 (see <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/signatories.html>). The UN Convention is the first global comprehensive international anticorruption agreement. The UN Convention requires countries to establish criminal and other offences to cover a wide range of acts of corruption. The UN Convention goes beyond previous anticorruption instruments, covering a broad range of issues ranging from basic forms of corruption such as bribery and solicitation, embezzlement, trading in influence to the concealment and laundering of the proceeds of corruption. The Convention contains transnational business bribery provisions that are functionally similar to those in the OECD Antibribery Convention and contains provisions on private sector auditing and books and records requirements. Other provisions address matters such as prevention, international cooperation, and asset recovery. Trinidad and Tobago is a party to the UN Convention.



**OAS Convention:** In 1996, the Member States of the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted the first international anticorruption legal instrument, the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (OAS Convention), which entered into force in March 1997. The OAS Convention, among other things, establishes a set of preventive measures against corruption, provides for the criminalization of certain acts of corruption, including transnational bribery and illicit enrichment, and contains a series of provisions to strengthen the cooperation between its States Parties in areas such as mutual legal assistance and technical cooperation. As of December 2009, the OAS Convention has 33 parties (see <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/Sigs/b-58.html>) Trinidad and Tobago is a party to the OAS Convention.

**Council of Europe Criminal Law and Civil Law Conventions:** Many European countries are parties to either the Council of Europe (CoE) Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, the Civil Law Convention, or both. The Criminal Law Convention requires criminalization of a wide range of national and transnational conduct, including bribery, money-laundering, and account offenses. It also incorporates provisions on liability of legal persons and witness protection. The Civil Law Convention includes provisions on compensation for damage relating to corrupt acts, whistleblower protection, and validity of contracts, inter alia. The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) was established in 1999 by the CoE to monitor compliance with these and related anti-corruption standards. Currently, GRECO comprises 46 member States (45 European countries and the United States). As of December 2009, the Criminal Law Convention has 42 parties and the Civil Law Convention has 34 (see [www.coe.int/greco](http://www.coe.int/greco).) Trinidad and Tobago is not a party to the Council of Europe Conventions.

**Free Trade Agreements:** While it is U.S. Government policy to include anticorruption provisions in free trade agreements (FTAs) that it negotiates with its trading partners, the anticorruption provisions have evolved over time. The most recent FTAs negotiated now require trading partners to criminalize “active bribery” of public officials (offering bribes to any public official must be made a criminal offense, both domestically and trans-nationally) as well as domestic “passive bribery” (solicitation of a bribe by a domestic official). All U.S. FTAs may be found at the U.S. Trade Representative Website: <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements>. Trinidad and Tobago does not have a free trade agreement (FTA) in place with the United States, although the United States does have a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with CARICOM, of which TT is a member.

**Local Laws:** U.S. firms should familiarize themselves with local anticorruption laws, and, where appropriate, seek legal counsel. While the U.S. Department of Commerce cannot provide legal advice on local laws, the Department’s U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service can provide assistance with navigating the host country’s legal system and obtaining a list of local legal counsel.

**Assistance for U.S. Businesses:** The U.S. Department of Commerce offers several services to aid U.S. businesses seeking to address business-related corruption issues. For example, the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service can provide services that may assist U.S. companies in conducting their due diligence as part of the company’s overarching compliance program when choosing business partners or agents overseas. The U.S. Foreign and Commercial Service can be reached directly through its offices in every major U.S. and foreign city, or through its Website at [www.trade.gov/cs](http://www.trade.gov/cs).

The Departments of Commerce and State provide worldwide support for qualified U.S. companies bidding on foreign government contracts through the Commerce Department's Advocacy Center and State's Office of Commercial and Business Affairs. Problems, including alleged corruption by foreign governments or competitors, encountered by U.S. companies in seeking such foreign business opportunities can be brought to the attention of appropriate U.S. government officials, including local embassy personnel and through the Department of Commerce Trade Compliance Center "Report A Trade Barrier" Website at [tcc.export.gov/Report\\_a\\_Barrier/index.asp](http://tcc.export.gov/Report_a_Barrier/index.asp).

**Guidance on the U.S. FCPA:** The Department of Justice's (DOJ) FCPA Opinion Procedure enables U.S. firms and individuals to request a statement of the Justice Department's present enforcement intentions under the anti-bribery provisions of the FCPA regarding any proposed business conduct. The details of the opinion procedure are available on DOJ's Fraud Section Website at [www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa](http://www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa). Although the Department of Commerce has no enforcement role with respect to the FCPA, it supplies general guidance to U.S. exporters who have questions about the FCPA and about international developments concerning the FCPA. For further information, see the Office of the Chief Counsel for International Counsel, U.S. Department of Commerce, Website, at [http://www.ogc.doc.gov/trans\\_anti\\_bribery.html](http://www.ogc.doc.gov/trans_anti_bribery.html). More general information on the FCPA is available at the Websites listed below.

Exporters and investors should be aware that generally all countries prohibit the bribery of their public officials, and prohibit their officials from soliciting bribes under domestic laws. Most countries are required to criminalize such bribery and other acts of corruption by virtue of being parties to various international conventions discussed above.

Corruption has traditionally appeared to be moderate and has not seriously undermined government or business operations. Trinidad and Tobago has a number of laws, regulations and penalties designed to combat corruption and fraud and the local press actively reports on allegations of waste, fraud or abuse of public resources. International drug trafficking, with its concomitant corruption, could pose a threat to the investment climate, but the government is making some efforts to combat both illegal narcotics and the influence of money laundering.

With economic activity and growth on the rise, TT's active press, trade associations, and business community have increasingly reported allegations of corruption involving government contracts. As elsewhere, competing businesspersons may seek to influence decisions in their favor through personal connections. The government has established a number of commissions of inquiry into inappropriate conduct in public contracting that initiated investigations resulting in the indictment of several private individuals and both former and current public officials, including two cabinet ministers.

Public perceptions of corruption have increased each of the last four years. The Transparency International 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Trinidad and Tobago 73 out of 178 countries, an improvement over the rank of 79 in 2009. The new government, elected in May 2010, was elected on a platform of increased transparency, and since coming to office has initiated a review of tender procedures, and promised to improve the legal framework, and implement a sustained fight against corruption.

## Anti-Corruption Resources

Some useful resources for individuals and companies regarding combating corruption in global markets include the following:

- Information about the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), including a “Lay-Person’s Guide to the FCPA” is available at the U.S. Department of Justice’s Website at: <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa>.
- Information about the OECD Antibribery Convention including links to national implementing legislation and country monitoring reports is available at: [http://www.oecd.org/departement/0,3355,en\\_2649\\_34859\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/departement/0,3355,en_2649_34859_1_1_1_1_1,00.html). See also new Antibribery Recommendation and Good Practice Guidance Annex for companies: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/40/44176910.pdf>
- General information about anticorruption initiatives, such as the OECD Convention and the FCPA, including translations of the statute into several languages, is available at the Department of Commerce Office of the Chief Counsel for International Commerce Website: [http://www.ogc.doc.gov/trans\\_anti\\_bribery.html](http://www.ogc.doc.gov/trans_anti_bribery.html).
- Transparency International (TI) publishes an annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The CPI measures the perceived level of public-sector corruption in 180 countries and territories around the world. The CPI is available at: [http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2009](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009). TI also publishes an annual *Global Corruption Report* which provides a systematic evaluation of the state of corruption around the world. It includes an in-depth analysis of a focal theme, a series of country reports that document major corruption related events and developments from all continents and an overview of the latest research findings on anti-corruption diagnostics and tools. See <http://www.transparency.org/publications/gcr>.
- The World Bank Institute publishes Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). These indicators assess six dimensions of governance in 212 countries, including Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law and Control of Corruption. See [http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/sc\\_country.asp](http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/sc_country.asp). The World Bank Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Surveys may also be of interest and are available at: <http://go.worldbank.org/RQQXYJ6210>.
- The World Economic Forum publishes the *Global Enabling Trade Report*, which presents the rankings of the Enabling Trade Index, and includes an assessment of the transparency of border administration (focused on bribe payments and corruption) and a separate segment on corruption and the regulatory environment. See <http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/GlobalEnablingTradeReport/index.htm>.
- Additional country information related to corruption can be found in the U.S. State Department’s annual *Human Rights Report* available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/>.

- Global Integrity, a nonprofit organization, publishes its annual *Global Integrity Report*, which provides indicators for 92 countries with respect to governance and anti-corruption. The report highlights the strengths and weaknesses of national level anti-corruption systems. The report is available at: <http://report.globalintegrity.org/>.

## **Bilateral Investment Agreements**

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The Bilateral Investment Treaty between the United States and Trinidad and Tobago came into force in 1996. A double-taxation agreement between the United States and Trinidad and Tobago has existed since the early 1970's. Trinidad and Tobago also has bilateral investment agreements with the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Korea, Spain, and China among others and is negotiating a BIT with India.

## **OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs**

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The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) extend services to projects in Trinidad and Tobago. TT is one of three target markets for the AIC Caribbean Fund, established in 2006 with OPIC financing US\$80 million and a target capitalization of US\$250 million. TT is also among 22 countries in the Caribbean and Central America eligible for a US\$200 million OPIC loan facility administered through Citigroup. Since 2008 both OPIC and the EXIM have considered and/or provided financing or guaranteeing projects in TT, including a chemical plant and the pending acquisition of military helicopters.

## **Labor**

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Labor relations are governed by the Industrial Relations Act (IRA), which provides for dispute resolution through an industrial court in instances where the issue cannot be resolved at the collective bargaining table or through conciliation efforts by the Ministry of Labor.

Approximately 22-24 percent of Trinidad and Tobago's workforce is unionized. The IRA provides for the mandatory recognition of trade unions when a union satisfies the Registration Recognition and Certification Board that it represents more than fifty percent of the workers in a specified bargaining unit.

Wages and salaries vary considerably between industries. The national minimum wage is presently TT\$12.00 per hour (approximately USD 1.90) with associated overtime rates. The Maternity Protection Act of 1998 provides for maternity benefits. The Occupational Safety and Health Act is now in force.

Unemployment reached a low of 5.1 percent in the second quarter of 2009 before rising to 5.9 percent in December 2009 and has hovered, according to most estimates, around 6 percent in 2010, although some believe the actual rate is higher. The labor market offers a high proportion of skilled and experienced workers, and the educational level of the population is among the highest in the developing world, though there is a gap between official literacy statistics and functional literacy.

Foreign workers, most notably from China, are utilized primarily in the construction of large-scale, public infrastructure projects. General contractors complain of a lack of skilled labor in construction-related fields and an inability to meet construction deadlines utilizing only domestic subcontractors and labor.

## **Foreign-Trade Zones/Free Ports**

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The Free Zones Act of 1988 (last amended in 1997) established the Trinidad and Tobago Free Zones Company to promote export development and foreign investment projects in a relatively bureaucracy-free, duty-free and tax-free environment. The Program is administered by the Trinidad and Tobago Free Zones Company Ltd (TTFZ). There are currently 28 approved enterprises located in six Free Zones. The majority are located within a multiple-user site in D'Abadie. Other companies had their current locations designated as Free Zones.

Free Zone enterprises may be established in any part of the country. They are 100 percent exempt from:

- customs duties on capital goods, parts and raw materials for use in the construction and equipping of premises and in connection with the approved activity
- import and export licensing requirements
- land and building taxes
- work permit fees
- foreign currency and property ownership restrictions
- capital gains and taxes
- withholding taxes on distribution of profits and corporation taxes or levies on sales or profits
- VAT on goods supplied to a Free Zone
- duty on vehicles for use only within the Free Zone.

A corporation tax exemption for entities that qualify for free zone status is also in force. Currently, companies locating in a Free Zone may accept or decline the tax holiday with the understanding that, if enacted, a proposal to abolish the corporation tax holiday may be retroactive back to 2007. Indirect tax privileges, such as the import duty exemptions and VAT exemptions listed above will be retained.

Application to carry out an approved activity in an existing free zone area is made on specified forms to the Trinidad and Tobago Free Zones Company. Approval is granted by order of the Free Zones Company.

If the project requires designation of a new free zone area, a separate application form for designation is made to the Free Zones Company which recommends designation to the Minister of Trade and Industry. Designation is effected by order of the Minister.

Applications for work permit waivers are recommended by the Free Zones Company through the work permit secretariat of the Ministry of National Security.

Free Zone activities that qualify for approval include manufacturing for export, international trading in products, services for export, and development and management of free zones. Production activity involving petroleum, natural gas or petrochemicals and activities involving investment in excess of US\$50 million do not qualify for the program.

## Foreign Direct Investment Statistics

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Economic reform and trade and investment liberalization have led to substantial foreign investment inflows. The U.S. continues to be the single largest source of foreign investment in Trinidad and Tobago. Other large foreign investors include the United Kingdom (petroleum and financial services), Canada (petroleum, petrochemicals and financial services), Germany (petrochemicals), India (iron/steel), Norway (petrochemicals), Australia (petroleum) and Spain (petroleum).

The bulk of foreign investment is in the country's lucrative energy-based sectors. However, there is evidence of growing interest among investors in the non-oil sectors of the economy, in areas such as information technology, wood and wood products, and the entertainment industry. U.S.-based restaurant franchises are also well represented.

2009 FDI inflows totaled US\$709 million (~TT\$4.47 billion), equivalent to 2.8% of GDP. 2009 FDI outflows totaled US\$2 million (~TT\$12.6 billion), equivalent to .008% of GDP. 2009 inward FDI stock totaled US\$16.875 billion (~TT\$106.31 billion), equivalent to 66.8% of GDP. 2009 outward FDI stock totaled US\$2.121 billion (~TT\$13.4 billion), equivalent to 8.4% of GDP. (Source: UNCTAD World Investment Report 2010).

U.S. energy companies Chevron and EOG Resources have significant investments in oil and gas exploration and production. Other U.S. companies in the upstream energy sector include Anadarko/Kerr-McGee and Fluor. Other international energy companies include BP, BG, Repsol YPF, Talisman, Petro-Canada, and BHP Billiton.

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## Chapter 7: Trade and Project Financing

- [How Do I Get Paid \(Methods of Payment\)](#)
- [How Does the Banking System Operate](#)
- [Foreign-Exchange Controls](#)
- [U.S. Banks and Local Correspondent Banks](#)
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### How Do I Get Paid (Methods of Payment)

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There are no restrictions on repatriation of capital, profits, dividends, interest, distributions or gains on investment. All types of payment are available and employed through the local banking sector that has foreign correspondent relationships. Where applicable, there is a liability for the payment of withholding tax (a tax based on various income payments to non-residents). A reduction in the withholding tax rate on distribution and payment proposed in the 2008 budget was enacted in the Finance (No.2) Act of 2007.

The most common methods of payment are:

- Letters of credit
- Bill discounting
- Electronic funds transfer
- Credit cards

Credit Rating Agencies:

Caribbean Information and Credit Rating Services Limited  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Furness Court  
90 Independence Square, Port of Spain  
Tel: (868) 627-8879; Fax: (868) 625-8871  
Email: [info@caricris.com](mailto:info@caricris.com)  
Website: [www.caricris.com](http://www.caricris.com)

Collection Agencies:

A. V. Knowles and Company Limited  
50 Woodford Street, Newtown  
Port of Spain  
Tel: (868) 628-2062/63; Fax: (868) 622 - 8576  
E-mail: [info@avknowles.com](mailto:info@avknowles.com)  
Website: [www.avknowles.com](http://www.avknowles.com)

Credit Check Limited  
Cor. Gallus Street and Wrightson Road



Woodbrook, Port of Spain  
TEL: (868) 624-2439; FAX: (868) 627-2329  
Website: [www.creditchexltd.com](http://www.creditchexltd.com)

Edward Soon and Company Limited  
Tradezone Complex  
El Socorro Extension Road, San Juan  
TEL: (868) 622-2454/628-2846; FAX: 623-7666

## **How Does the Banking System Operate**

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The financial services industry in Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most developed in the Caribbean. The country has a reliable banking system, with eight commercial banks (including one state-owned bank), with six operating merchant banks and one merchant bank and related financial institutions. There is an extensive linked network of ATMs and point of sale operations shared by four of the banks throughout the country. Telephone and internet banking services are provided by the banks and they also offer a variety of advance products and services. The Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago (CBTT) determines monetary policy, sets rates and reserve requirements, and regulates the operations of the commercial and other financial institutions. There are no restrictions on borrowing by foreign investors. To facilitate the resolution of customer's complaints from the commercial banks, the Office of the Banking Services Ombudsman was established in 2003. Legislation and regulations regarding money laundering and terrorism financing are outlined in the CBTT's Guideline on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing. The Anti-Terrorism Act was passed in 2005. This legislation provides for the detection, prevention, prosecution, conviction and punishment of terrorist activities and the confiscation, forfeiture and seizure of terrorists' assets.

## **Foreign-Exchange Controls**

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There are no foreign exchange control restrictions.

## **U.S. Banks and Local Correspondent Banks**

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All Trinidad and Tobago (TT) banks have correspondent relationships with U.S. and Canadian banks. Citigroup is the only U.S. bank with offices in TT. A number of U.S. banks have been active in providing project financing, divestment brokerage, and overseas bond marketing services, and acting as correspondent banks for U.S. agricultural credit programs.

## **Project Financing**

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In 2011, international credit rating agency Standard and Poor's affirmed an A/Stable/A-1 foreign currency and A+/Stable/A-1 local currency sovereign credit ratings for Trinidad and Tobago reflecting the solid external and fiscal position of the country's economy.

## Web Resources

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Export-Import Bank of the United States: <http://www.exim.gov>

Country Limitation Schedule: [http://www.exim.gov/tools/country/country\\_limits.html](http://www.exim.gov/tools/country/country_limits.html)

OPIC: <http://www.opic.gov>

Trade and Development Agency: <http://www.tda.gov/>

SBA's Office of International Trade: <http://www.sba.gov/oit/>

USDA Commodity Credit Corporation: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ccs/default.htm>

U.S. Agency for International Development: <http://www.usaid.gov>

Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago: <http://www.central-bank.org.tt>

Citibank Trinidad and Tobago Limited: <http://www.citibank.com/trinidad>

First Citizens Bank: <http://www.firstcitizenstt.com>

RBTT Bank Limited: <http://www.rbtt.com>

Republic Bank Limited: <http://www.republictt.com>

Scotiabank Trinidad and Tobago Limited: <http://www.scotiabank.com>

FirstCaribbean International Bank (Trinidad and Tobago) Limited:

<http://www.firstcaribbeanbank.com>:

Trinidad and Tobago Unit Trust Corporation: <http://www.ttutc.com>

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## Chapter 8: Business Travel

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- [Telecommunications](#)
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- [Local Time, Business Hours and Holidays](#)
- [Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings](#)
- [Web Resources](#)

### Business Customs

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Local business customs reflect those of the United States. Business people are informal and friendly and value personal contact and courtesy. First names are freely used after the initial meeting. Dress is basically American in style. Standard office wear for men is shirt and tie, or business suit. Women generally wear dresses, skirts or pantsuits.

### Travel Advisory

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Travel advisories are available at the Department of State website, <http://travel.state.gov>.

### Visa Requirements

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U.S. citizens must have a passport to enter Trinidad and Tobago (TT). Visas are not required for tourist or business stays of up to three months. Work permits are required for certain types of compensated and non-compensated employment, including missionary work. The immigration regulations of TT allow persons entering the country to engage in gainful employment in any trade, profession or occupation without a work permit for a period not exceeding 30 days, with one entry per twelve months period permitted. Business visitors should be sure to check the "business" box, rather than the "work" box on the immigration entry form, unless they are actually being paid in TT. For further information, travelers may contact the Embassy of TT at 1708 Massachusetts Avenue N.W. Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: (202) 467-6490.

U.S. companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should be advised that security evaluations are handled via an interagency process. Visa applicants should go to the following links.

State Department Visa Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/>

U.S. Embassy Consular Section: <http://trinidad.usembassy.gov/>

## **Telecommunications**

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Telecommunications networks are reliable and users can access the U.S. and other countries by direct dial. The area code for Trinidad and Tobago is (868). Costs, though falling, are higher than in the USA. Broadband and wireless Internet services are available, as are cable TV and satellite services.

## **Transportation**

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Trinidad and Tobago has a well-developed infrastructure, including two international airports and paved roads and highways. Major airlines such as American, Delta, Continental and Caribbean Airlines operate scheduled daily flights to and from the US/TT. There is a daily inter-island ferry service between Port of Spain, Trinidad and Scarborough in Tobago. Goods and services are regularly distributed throughout the island, even to the most remote areas. Driving is on the left side of the road. There is no rail transport. A water taxi service between Port of Spain and San Fernando was introduced in December 2008. Caribbean Airlines operates daily flights between the two islands. Buses operate from hubs in Port of Spain, Chaguanas, San Fernando and in Tobago. Route and private taxis are available, but it is suggested that private taxis be used by visitors. Local and international car rental services are available. Road traffic is extremely heavy during the day; it is, therefore, advisable to allow sufficient time between appointments.

## **Language**

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English is the official language of Trinidad and Tobago. The government has launched a program to promote Spanish as a second language, but Spanish fluency is rare except among immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries.

## **Health**

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Medical care in TT, although good, is generally not up to U.S. standards. Doctors and dentists in most specialties, many with overseas training, are available and inexpensive. Air ambulance service is available for emergencies. Almost all prescription drugs can be bought locally. Tap water is potable.

## Local Time, Business Hours, and Holidays

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Local Time: GMT-4 (Equivalent to EDT in summer; one hour ahead of EST in winter). Daylight savings time is not observed in Trinidad and Tobago.

Standard business hours are from 8:00 am to 4:00/4:30 PM for government and most other offices. Banking hours vary:

8:00 am to 2:00 pm, Mondays to Thursdays

8:00 am to 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm, Fridays

Shopping mall branches: 9:00/10:00 am to 6:00/7:00 pm

TT holidays in 2011

New Year's Day	January 1
Carnival ( <i>unofficial</i> )	March 7-8*
Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day	March 30
Good Friday	April 22
Easter Monday	April 25
Arrival Day	May 30
Corpus Christi	June 3
Labor Day	June 19
Emancipation Day	August 1
Independence Day	August 31
Eid-UI-Fitr ( <i>variable</i> )	September 9 (est.)*
Republic Day	September 24
Divali ( <i>variable</i> )	November 5 (est.)*
Christmas Day	December 25
Boxing Day	December 26

\* Carnival Monday and Tuesday (preceding Ash Wednesday) are not public holidays. However, almost all businesses are closed. Exact dates for the Muslim festival of Eid-UI-Fitr and Hindu festival Divali are announced just prior to their observance each year. Also, when a public holiday falls on a Sunday, the holiday is observed on the Monday following immediately. When two public holidays fall on the same date, the following date is also given as a public holiday.

## Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings

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Temporary entry of personal and household effects are allowed duty free and VAT free once the person is in possession of an approved work permit per Customs Act 78:01 Schedule 2, 6a and 6b.

A wide range of housing is available, from large, modern houses with pools to condominiums or townhouse apartments. Residential areas are within convenient commuting distance of all commercial and industrial areas. Rental and purchase costs vary, although prices have gone up substantially since 2004, following the boom in energy prices. Rental prices in Port of Spain suburbs for small houses comparable to U.S. middle class homes are US\$3,500 - \$5,000 a month. Executive-type houses rent for US\$5,000 to US\$8,000 a month. Reputable real estate agents are available.

## **Web Resources**

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Trinidad and Tobago Government on line: <http://www.ttconnect.gov.tt>

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## Chapter 9: Contacts, Market Research and Trade Events

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- [Market Research](#)
- [Trade Events](#)

### Contacts

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U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain  
Political/Economic Section  
Jeff Mazur, Chief - (822-5986)  
Todd Jungenberg, Economic/Commercial Officer - (822-5918)  
U.S. Embassy  
15 Queen's Park West  
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago  
Tel: (868) 622-6371; Fax: (868) 822-5994  
-OR-  
U.S. Embassy Port of Spain  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20521-3410

U.S. Commercial Service  
Robert O. Jones, Jr., Regional Senior Commercial Officer  
Caribbean Region  
Ave. Pedro Henriquez Urena No. 133  
Edificio Empresarial Reyna 1, 5th Floor  
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic  
Tel: (809) 227-2121; Fax: (809) 920-0267  
-OR—  
Unit 5515, Box 508  
APO AA 34041

U.S. Commercial Service  
María Elena Portorreal  
Senior Commercial Advisor for the Caribbean Region  
U.S. Commercial Service  
U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo  
Tel: 809-227-2121 ext. 225; Fax: 809-920-0267  
-OR-  
Unit 5515, Box 508  
APO AA 34041

Caribbean Basin Agricultural Trade Office  
Katherine Nishiura, Director  
909 S.E. 1st Avenue, Suite 720  
Brickell Plaza Federal Building

Miami, FL 33131  
Tel: (305) 536-5300; Fax: (305) 536-7577  
E-mail: [cbato@cbato.net](mailto:cbato@cbato.net)  
Website: [www.cbato.fas.usda.gov](http://www.cbato.fas.usda.gov)

#### Washington-based U.S. Government Contacts

U.S. Department of Commerce/Caribbean Basin Division  
Michelle Brooks, Desk Officer for Trinidad and Tobago  
Department of Commerce  
14th Street and Constitution Ave. Room 3203  
Washington, DC 20230  
Tel: (202) 482-1648; Fax: (202) 482-4726  
E-Mail: [Michelle\\_Brooks@ita.doc.gov](mailto:Michelle_Brooks@ita.doc.gov)

U.S. Department of State  
Office of Caribbean Affairs, WHA/CAR  
Karen McIsaac, Country Officer for Trinidad and Tobago  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW, Room 4262  
Washington, DC 20520  
Tel: (202) 647-4384; Fax: (202) 647-2901

Office of Business Affairs – EB/CBA  
Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW, Room 2318  
Washington, DC 20520  
TEL: (202) 647-0079; FAX: (202) 647-6408

Trade Information Center in Washington: 1-800-USA-TRADE

#### Trinidad and Tobago Government Agencies

E-TecK – Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Co. Ltd.  
Don Miguel Road Extension  
El Socorro, San Juan  
Tel: (868) 675-1989  
Fax: (868) 675-9125  
Website: <http://www.eteck.co.tt>

Trinidad and Tobago Free Zones Company Limited (TTFZ)  
Michael Leschaloupe, Chief Executive Officer  
Albion Court, 2nd Floor West  
61 Dundonald Street, Port of Spain  
Tel: (868) 625-4749 or 623-8363; Fax: (868) 625-4755  
E-mail: [tffzco@tstt.net.tt](mailto:tffzco@tstt.net.tt)

Chaguaramas Development Authority (CDA)  
Ms. Judith Mark, General Manager  
Airway Road, Chaguaramas

-OR—

P.O. Box 3162, Carenage  
Tel: (868) 634-4227/4349; Fax: (868) 634-4311  
E-mail: [chagdev@tstt.net.tt](mailto:chagdev@tstt.net.tt); [jmark@chagdev.com](mailto:jmark@chagdev.com)  
Website: [www.chagdev.com](http://www.chagdev.com)

Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards  
Derick Omar, Chief Executive Officer  
1-2, Century Drive  
Trincity Industrial Estate, Macoya  
TEL: (868) 662-8827; FAX: (868) 663-4335  
Email: [ttbs@ttbs.org.tt](mailto:ttbs@ttbs.org.tt)

Chemistry/Food and Drugs Division  
Ministry of Health  
92 Frederick Street, Port of Spain  
Tel: (868) 624-5968/623-5242; Fax: (868) 623-2477  
Email: [cfdd@carib-link.net](mailto:cfdd@carib-link.net)  
(Monitors imports of foodstuffs, drug, cosmetics, medical devices, and supplies.)

#### Country Trade Associations and Chambers of Commerce

American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago  
Simon Aqui, President  
Desiree Gobin-Seecharan, Executive Director  
62 Maraval Road, Port of Spain  
Tel: (868) 622-0340, 4466, 628-2508; Fax: (868) 628-9428  
E-mail: [execd@amchamtt.com](mailto:execd@amchamtt.com); [inbox@amchamtt.com](mailto:inbox@amchamtt.com)  
Website: <http://www.amchamtt.com>

Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc.  
Ms. Catherine Kumar, Chief Executive Officer  
P.O. Box 499, Port of Spain  
Columbus Circle, Westmoorings  
Tel: (868) 637-6966; Fax: (868) 637-7425  
E-mail: [ckumar@chamber.org.tt](mailto:ckumar@chamber.org.tt)  
Website: <http://www.chamber.org.tt>

Energy Chamber of Trinidad and Tobago  
Dr. Thackwray Driver, Chief Executive Officer  
Suite B2.03, Atlantic Plaza, Point Lisas, Couva  
Tel: (868) 679-4782; 6623; 8135; 1398; Fax: (868) 679-4242  
E-Mail: [ExecOffice@energy.tt](mailto:ExecOffice@energy.tt)  
Website: <http://www.energy.tt/>

Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association  
Dominic Hadeed, President  
TTMA Building, 42 Tenth Avenue, Barataria  
Tel: (868) 675-8862; Fax: (868) 675-9000  
E-mail: [support@ttma.com](mailto:support@ttma.com) or [service@ttma.com](mailto:service@ttma.com)  
Website: <http://www.ttma.com>



## Country Market Research Firms

Caribbean Market Research Ltd.  
Brenda Bayley, Managing Director  
21A Marli Street, Port of Spain  
TEL: (868) 622-6545; FAX: (868) 622-4924  
E-Mail: [caribres@wow.net](mailto:caribres@wow.net)  
Website: [www.caribbeanmarketresearch.com](http://www.caribbeanmarketresearch.com)

Mary King and Associates – Harris Interactive  
Mary King, Executive Chairman  
Cor. Deane and Warner Streets, St. Augustine  
TEL: (868) 662-9535 or 663-6751; FAX: (868) 663-4252  
E-Mail: [maryking@carib-link.net](mailto:maryking@carib-link.net); [trinidad@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:trinidad@harrisinteractive.com)  
Website: <http://www.harrisinteractive.com>

Market Facts and Opinions Ltd.  
16-18 Tragarete Road, Port of Spain  
TEL: (868) 627-8417/8524; FAX: (868) 625-7913  
E-Mail: [mfo@mfo2000.com](mailto:mfo@mfo2000.com)  
Website: <http://www.mfo2000.com>

Namdevco (National Agriculture Marketing and Development Company)  
(Research in food and agricultural sector, agro-industry)  
Elbert Johnson, Acting Chief Executive Officer  
S S Erin Road, Debe  
TEL: (868) 647-3218; FAX: (868) 647-6087  
E-Mail: [ceonamdevco@rave-tt.net](mailto:ceonamdevco@rave-tt.net)  
Website: <http://www.namdevco.com>

## Commercial Banks

Bank of Baroda (Trinidad and Tobago) Limited  
Kishor P. Kharat, Deputy General Manager  
Furness House, 90 Independence Square  
Port of Spain  
Tel: (868) 624-7926; 625-3964; Fax: (868) 625-4215  
Email: [md.tt@bankofbaroda.com](mailto:md.tt@bankofbaroda.com)  
Website: <http://www.bankofbaroda.com>

Citi Trinidad and Tobago  
Dennis Evans, Country Corporate Officer (CCO)  
12 Queen's Park East  
Port of Spain  
Tel: (868) 625-1046-9; Fax: (868) 624-8131 or 627-6128  
Website: <http://www.citigroup.com>

FirstCaribbean International Bank (Trinidad and Tobago) Limited  
Ian Chinapoo, Managing Director - Trinidad Operating Company  
74 Long Circular Road, Maraval

Tel: (868) 628-4685; Fax: (868) 625-8906; 622-3422  
Website: [www.firstcaribbeanbank.com](http://www.firstcaribbeanbank.com)

First Citizens Bank  
Larry Howai, Chief Executive Officer  
9 Queens Park East  
Corporate Centre  
Port of Spain  
Tel: (868) 624-3178; Fax: (868) 624-5981  
Website: <http://www.firstcitizensstt.com>

Intercommercial Bank Limited.  
Hugh Duncan, Group CEO and Managing Director  
DSM Plaza, Old Southern Main Road  
Chaguana  
Tel: (868) 665-4425; Fax: (868) 665-6663  
Website: <http://www.intercommercialtt.com>

RBTT Bank Ltd.  
Suresh Sookoo, Group Chief Executive Officer  
Royal Court, 6th Floor, 19-21 Park Street  
P.O. Box 287, Port of Spain  
Tel: (868) 623-1322/ext. 2606; Fax: (868) 625-3764  
E-Mail: [info@tt.rbtt.com](mailto:info@tt.rbtt.com)  
Website: <http://www.rbtt.com>

Republic Bank Ltd.  
David J. Dulal-Whiteway, Managing Director  
Republic House, 9-17 Park Street  
Mailing: P.O. Box 1153, Port of Spain  
Tel: (868) 625-3611-7; Fax: (868) 624-1323  
E-Mail: [email@republictt.com](mailto:email@republictt.com)  
Website: <http://www.republictt.com>

ScotiaBank Trinidad and Tobago Ltd.  
Richard Young, Managing Director  
Scotia Centre, Park and Richmond Streets  
Port of Spain  
Tel: (868) 625-3566; Fax: (868) 624-2179  
E-Mail: [richard.young@scotiabank.com](mailto:richard.young@scotiabank.com)  
Website: <http://www.scotiabanktt.com>

#### U.S.-Based Multipliers Relevant for Trinidad and Tobago

American Soybean Association  
Steve Censky, CEO  
12125 Woodcrest Executive Dr.  
Suite #100  
St. Louis, MO 63141-9200  
TEL: (314) 576-1770; FAX: (314) 576-2786  
E-Mail: [scensky@soy.org](mailto:scensky@soy.org)

Website: <http://www.soygrowers.com>

Association of American Chambers of Commerce in Latin America  
Patrick Kilbride, Executive Vice President  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Building  
1615 H Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20062-2000  
TEL: (202) 463-5485; FAX: (202) 463-3126  
E-Mail: [pkilbride@aaccla.org](mailto:pkilbride@aaccla.org); [info@aaccla.org](mailto:info@aaccla.org)  
Website: <http://www.aaccla.org>

U.S. Wheat Associates  
Joseph K. Sowers, Assistant Regional Director  
Paseo de las Palmas No. 405, Piso 3, Suite 304  
Col. Lomas de Chapultepec  
México, D.F. 11000  
Phone: (52-55) 5202-2075; 5202-5125; Fax: (52-55) 2623-1109  
Email: [jsowers@uswheat.org](mailto:jsowers@uswheat.org)  
Website: <http://www.uswheat.org>

USA Pears  
Raquel Benaim  
c/o Geneva Chambers  
Global Productions  
Betania, Vial de las Acacias,  
Casa # 6125, Ciudad de Panamá  
Panamá  
Tel: 507-6678.0447  
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## Market Research

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Please note that these reports are only available to U.S. citizens and U.S. companies. Registration to the site is required and free.

## Trade Events

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Please click on the link below for information on upcoming trade events.

<http://www.export.gov/tradeevents/index.asp>

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## Chapter 10: Guide to Our Services

The President's National Export Initiative aims to double exports over five years by marshaling Federal agencies to **prepare U.S. companies to export successfully, connect them with trade opportunities** and **support them once they do have exporting opportunities**.

The U.S. Commercial Service offers customized solutions to help U.S. exporters, particularly small and medium sized businesses, successfully expand exports to new markets. Our global network of trade specialists will work one-on-one with you through every step of the exporting process, helping you to:

- Target the best markets with our world-class research
- Promote your products and services to qualified buyers
- Meet the best distributors and agents for your products and services
- Overcome potential challenges or trade barriers
- Gain access to the full range of U.S. government trade promotion agencies and their services, including export training and potential trade financing sources

To learn more about the Federal Government's trade promotion resources for new and experienced exporters, please click on the following link: [www.export.gov](http://www.export.gov)

For more information on the services the U.S. Commercial Service offers to U.S. exporters, please click on the following link:

[http://www.buyusa.gov/caribbean/en/trinidad\\_and\\_tobago.html](http://www.buyusa.gov/caribbean/en/trinidad_and_tobago.html)

U.S. exporters seeking general export information/assistance or country-specific commercial information can also contact the **U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center** at **(800) USA-TRAD(E)**.

**We value your feedback on the format and contents of this report. Please send your comments and recommendations to:** [Market\\_Research\\_Feedback@trade.gov](mailto:Market_Research_Feedback@trade.gov)

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